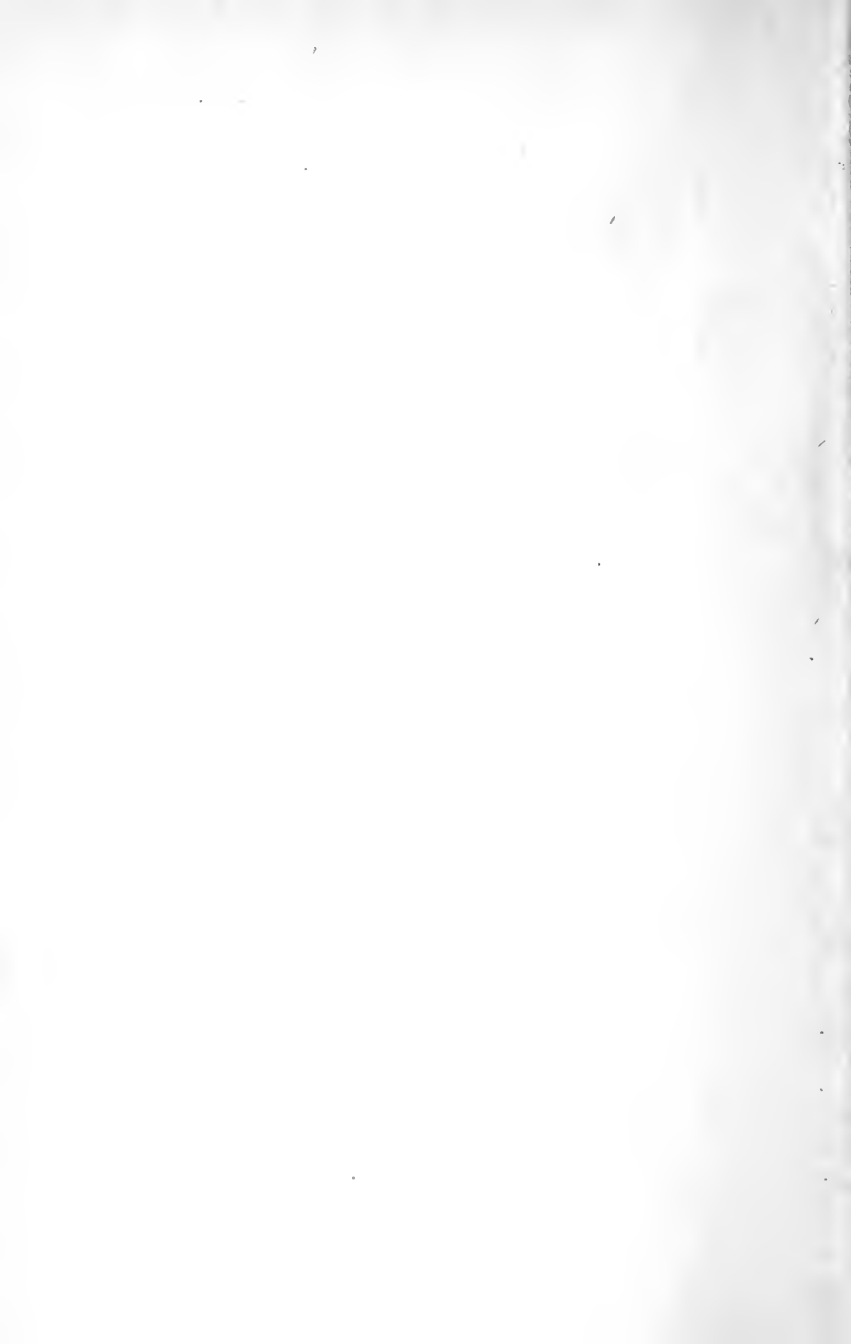




THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

T.H.
or F.H.
100



THE THEATRE OF IDEAS,

By **HENRY ARTHUR JONES**

**THE FOUNDATIONS OF A
NATIONAL DRAMA**

containing lectures delivered to Harvard, Yale and Columbia Universities; at the Royal Institution, London; with other lectures, essays and papers on the Drama, and photogravure portrait of the author.

THE DIVINE GIFT

A play in three acts, with dedication to Professor GILBERT MURRAY, LL.D., Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford, and photogravure portrait of the author.

THE LIE

A play in four acts, as played by Miss Margaret Illington.

**OTHER PLAYS BY
HENRY ARTHUR JONES**

THE SILVER KING	THE ROGUES COMEDY
SAINTS AND SINNERS	THE PHYSICIAN
THE MIDDLEMAN	THE LIARS
JUDAH	THE MANŒUVRES OF
THE DANCING GIRL	JANE
THE CRUSADERS	CARNAC SAHIB
THE TEMPTER	MRS. DANE'S DEFENCE
THE MASQUERADERS	WHITEWASHING JULIA
THE CASE OF REBEL-	JOSEPH ENTANGLED
LIUS SUSAN	THE HYPOCRITES
THE TRIUMPH OF THE	DOLLY REFORMING
PHILISTINES	HERSELF
MICHAEL AND HIS	MARY GOES FIRST
LOST ANGEL	

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation



HENRY ARTHUR JONES

The Theatre of Ideas

A B U R L E S Q U E A L L E G O R Y

AND

THREE ONE-ACT PLAYS

The Goal
Her Tongue
Grace Mary

BY

HENRY ARTHUR JONES

Author of "The Liars," "The Divine Gift," "Foundations of
a National Drama," etc.

New York

George H. Doran Company

PR 4827

T44

COPYRIGHT, 1914, 1915
CURTIS PUBLISHING COMPANY

COPYRIGHT, 1915
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

PREFACE

The following pages contain essays in burlesque, serious drama, comedy and tragedy—that is to say in all the forms of dramatic art, with the exception of romantic drama. When any country produces any one of these forms of drama, and clothes it in literature, it may claim to have a National Drama. Outside literature, a country may produce many deservedly successful plays which rightly amuse its populace; but it can have no National Drama. It is only when the best of a country's modern plays pass into its literature, and when also they pass into the repertories of theatres with sustained traditions of great acting and authorship, as at the Théâtre Français—it is only then that a country has a National Drama; or that its theatres are anything essentially different from a conjurer's show, a candy store, a child's toy shop, or the anteroom to a prostitute's boudoir.

Of the productions of the late Victorian stage, Gilbert's burlesques were, if not the greatest, yet certainly the most charming, the nearest to perfection; on the whole perhaps the most satisfying. But Gilbert never dared to smite the great vices

and insincerities of his time. Or perhaps he was not aware that any existed. He would scarcely have been successful in the theatre if he had attacked them. So he merely scratched at small social and political foibles and infirmities, and he remains a delightful dilettante in satire. A measure of Gilbert's views and aims is given in the fact that he never allowed a word or an idea to stray into Savoy opera that could give his young lady of fifteen a hint that she was not a large wax doll. It is not a complete view of human life which represents us as large wax dolls. If we wish to take Gilbert for a great satirist, a great burlesque writer, we must not mention Aristophanes, Rabelais, Swift, Butler of *Hudibras*, Butler of *Erewhon*, or Lord Byron.

I have long cherished three hopes for myself which I fear will never be realized—to stop a night at Dijon on my way southward and drink a bottle of old Burgundy at the *Clôche Hotel*—to get a week's leisure to read Hooker's "*Ecclesiastical Polity*"—and to write a burlesque for the English stage.

What a jolly, riotous, instructive art burlesque might be on the English and American stages! What a roaring feast of healthy laughter it might provide for our citizens! Comedy pricks us with a rapier through our correct, conventional everyday dress. Irony kisses us on the cheek while it slyly stabs us under the fifth rib. Burlesque

strips us bare to the skin, and then lays on with bludgeons and clubs and nintetails, while it romps and shouts around us. Comedy can best deal with knaveries and follies and vices and shams as they are shown in individuals. Burlesque can best deal with knaveries and follies and vices and shams as they are shown in communities.

How many falsities and solemn fooleries and hypocrisies rankly flourish in English and American life, and call loudly for the reckless, boisterous whacks and thumps that only burlesque can administer!

Every discerning American who visited England in the ten years preceeding the war must, I am sure, have been struck with the immense possibilities that English life offered to the burlesque writer. But in place of genuine burlesque we had the witless banalities and sniggering indecencies of musical comedy; supported, as it was, by all that was powerful and fashionable in the press and in society. We may look that war will cleanse away many of our English falsities and fooleries and hypocrisies. But burlesque would have been much cheaper and more amusing—though perhaps not so effective or permanent.

If I had followed my natural bent, I should have planned "The Theatre of Ideas" within a succinet framework, and written it as a play. But what dramatist to-day, with any knowledge of what burlesque might be, would foolishly produce

a burlesque of national and social follies and shams, with the certainty of thereby damaging his reputation with playgoers, and ruining his manager? I have therefore thrown "The Theatre of Ideas" into narrative form.

It is a discouraging sign that neither on the English nor American stage is there any demand for one-act plays. These should be widely supported, as a valuable school for young playwrights and young actors. "The Goal" was written in 1897, and I had to wait seventeen years before I could get anything approaching a suitable representation. It was produced by Mr. Holbrook Blinn at the Princess Theatre, New York, in October, 1914. It received very generous appreciation from the New York press, and I hope to offer it again to American playgoers.

The writing of "Her Tongue" pleasantly occupied me during a leisure week in Spain a few years ago. It might perhaps fill a corner in a bill without any danger of boring the audience. No such fate could be hoped for "Grace Mary," which, however unlike it may be to a Shakespearian tragedy, would probably be equally successful in keeping people out of the theatre.

A dramatist is often reproached for producing plays that are obviously below the standard of his aspirations, and obviously below the level of his best work. This assumes that the dramatist is, like the novelist, always free to do his best work. There could not be a greater mistake.

The dramatist is limited and curbed by a thousand conditions which are never suspected by the public. The drama will always remain a popular art. The dramatist who writes a play too far ahead of his public is like the statesman who makes a law too far ahead of the customs and morals of his people. The law is circumvented and disobeyed ; it can not be enforced, and thereby all law is brought into disrepute.

The dramatist who writes plays too far ahead, or too far away from the taste and habits of thought of the general body of playgoers, finds the theatre empty, his manager impoverished, and his own reputation and authority diminished or lost. No sympathy should be given to dramatists, however lofty their aims, who will not study to please the general body of playgoers of their days. If a dramatist has something to say that the general body of playgoers will not accept, let him, according to his message, say it in the pulpit, or on the platform, or in a pamphlet, or in a

novel. For instance, how much better employed many of our harum-scarum dramatists would be as presidents of social debating clubs. How much better employed many of our Pentonville omnibus dramatists would be as photographers of slums, or of the yet more dreary abodes of our middle classes. There is nothing worthy of admiration in persuading a theatrical manager to lose a thousand pounds a week in producing some tract or message that could be easily printed for a few shillings. This does not imply that the drama should say nothing and mean nothing. But we must not place the crown of martyrdom on the head of a dramatist who has bored the public, ruined his manager, and deprived himself of his own vogue and authority with playgoers.

Let us listen again to Goethe. He says, "Shakespeare and Molière wished above all things to make money by their theatres." Goethe is, of course, speaking of them as managers. They were like all other theatrical managers. But they wished to make money by offering their public the best plays that their public would accept. Here they were startlingly unlike some modern theatrical managers. There are horrible fortunes to be made in some kinds of theatrical management. So there are in keeping brothels.

The question to be asked concerning a dramatist is—"Does he desire to give the public the best they will accept from him, or does he give them

the readiest filth or nonsense that most quickly pays?" He cannot always even give the public the best that they would accept from him. In sitting down to write a play, he must first ask himself, "Can I get a manager of repute to produce this, and in such a way and at such a theatre that it can be seen to advantage? Can I get some leading actor or actress to play this part for the benefit of the play as a whole? Can I get these other individual types of character played in such a way that they will appear to be something like the persons I have in my mind?"

These and a hundred other questions the dramatist has to ask himself before he decides upon the play he will write. A mistake in the casting of a secondary character may ruin a play, so narrow is the margin of success. But when once a play is started and advertised it can be played in an outrageously insufficient or mistaken way and draw the crowds.

These considerations show that it is rarely possible for a dramatist to show his best work in the theatre under our present-day conditions.

His best chance comes immediately after a great popular success which has given him vogue and authority with playgoers. He may then venture to say to the public, "Kind friends, won't you come up a step higher?" He may then venture to give them his best, though he may know that he courts deliberate failure.

This has been my practice. After the great popular success of the "Silver King" I produced "Saints and Sinners." It was the best I could do at that time. It was hooted on the first night and condemned by nearly all the London press. It narrowly escaped failure, and only obtained success through Matthew Arnold's generous advocacy, and because of the discussion caused in religious circles by its presentation of certain phases of English dissenting life.

Since "Saints and Sinners" I have not been so fortunate. After the great popular success of "The Dancing Girl," I produced "The Crusaders." I gave William Morris *carte blanche* for the scenery and furniture, and he advised me on the whole production. I engaged the best possible cast, filling even the small parts with actors of great ability. It was hooted and booed, and again I met with the general condemnation of the London press. I lost four thousand pounds, and had to go out and collect the general public around me again.

After obtaining another popular success, I wrote "The Tempter," which, in print before production, received the most lavish praise from so fine a literary critic as the late H. D. Traill. Again I met with failure, and a cold reception from the press, losing much money for the manager; and again I had to go out and collect my general public around me.

After one or two more popular successes, I wrote "Michael and His Lost Angel." It was savagely hooted and booed by a first-night audience at the leading London theatre. And again I met with the general condemnation of the press. Here I think the public would have saved me, for the business was going up by leaps and bounds. After the eighth performance the managers, without giving me notice, announced its sudden withdrawal on the following Saturday, the eleventh performance.

I was then fortunate enough to get from Sir Charles Wyndham and Miss Mary Moore a very finished performance of my comedies, and they were uniformly and universally successful. But whenever I have found leisure, I have employed myself in writing plays without any consideration of production in the theatre. Of such are "The Divine Gift" and the pieces included in the present volume. Out of consideration for the manager's pocket, I have not offered "The Divine Gift" for production.

I hope I may be forgiven for intruding this personal matter by way of excuse and explanation. In no case do I blame or arraign the public, who, in the theatre, will always remain my masters, and whose grateful and willing servant I shall always remain. Indeed, under happier auspices I think that most of the work I have here reviewed might stand a chance, or would have

stood a chance, of some degree of popular success. But that a dramatist may be successful with his best work he needs the vogue, and a theatre and company suited to his methods, and a public that can understand him at the first. Every dramatist who respects himself and his public should print his plays either before or after production. This will give playgoers a measure of their intrinsic value.

Unfortunately, it will not confer immortality. I throw these little pieces into print, and dismiss them, feeling secure that they will soon reach their goal, that goal where we all swiftly tend—unsuccessful and successful playwrights alike; minor and major poets; demagogues and kings; even football stars and pretty vaudeville actresses who have their portraits in the papers arrive there at last—the limbo of unconsidered and inconsiderable things.

New York, January 5th, 1915.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	5
THE THEATRE OF IDEAS: A BURLESQUE ALLEGORY .	17
THE GOAL: A DRAMATIC FRAGMENT	101
HER TONGUE: A COMEDY IN ONE ACT	127
GRACE MARY: A TRAGEDY IN THE CORNISH DIALECT IN ONE ACT	151



THE THEATRE OF IDEAS,

THE THEATRE OF IDEAS,

A BURLESQUE ALLEGORY

“We are justly more impatient of the stupidities and extravagances of our own party than of the stupidities and extravagances of our opponents; for whereas the stupidities and extravagances of our opponents often further our aims, the stupidities and extravagances of our own party are often our most serious hindrances.

“The greatest enemies of a movement are its eccentrics and extremists.”—ARCHIBALD SPOFFORTH, *Maxims of Policy*.

Not far from where I live a handsome, pretentious building has been gradually lifting its walls during the last ten or twelve years. Costly decorations have been spread over its surfaces, with curious mottoes inlaid in scrolls, and written apparently in some remote and foreign tongue, for the characters are not recognizable as belonging to any European language. The edifice has an air of self-conscious importance, almost of sublimity. A broad flight of marble steps leads up to an imposing portico. “Evidently a temple of some kind,” has been my inward comment, as I have occasionally passed by.

One day I mingled with a number of persons who were reverently climbing the marble steps, and passed with them into the building. To my astonishment, I found myself in a bare and mean interior, which presented a startling contrast to the proud and lofty exterior. The place was dimly illuminated, except at moments when jets of light darted up, and then left a sense of bewilderment and darkness. The atmosphere was chilly, with occasional gusts of hot and cold wind. The chief pieces of furniture were a number of very modern statues on pedestals; ten or twelve in prominent front places, considerably larger than life, and one small bust in the background. Just at the moment I did not distinguish whom the statutes were intended to represent, for my attention was caught by a fairly large crowd of eager spectators, above whose heads appeared a swaying figure whom they were enthusiastically applauding.

I went up to the crowd and gently elbowed my way through them. When I was near enough, I saw that the swaying figure was valiantly astride a large wooden rocking horse. The animal had an elegant arched neck, abnormally distended nostrils, and fixed menacing eyes. I have never seen a rocking horse with better points and proportions, or one that looked more like a real horse. Across its hind-quarters was painted in large gilt

letters, PEGASUS. I could not see that he had any wings, but these may have been hidden under the embroidered blue and gold saddle cloth. The horse altogether was very nobly caparisoned, and had a silver-mounted bridle with tinkling bells. The rider, too, was gorgeously arrayed in a cavalier dress; he had large gilt spurs and carried a drawn sword. His seat was firm and courageous; he could not have borne himself more bravely if he had been riding a real horse. He accommodated himself very gracefully to the animal's action, and every now and then, as he saw his chance, he plunged his sword into an invisible enemy's body, or with a well-aimed stroke, chopped off his head. He was evidently much in earnest, for the sweat poured down his face. So thoroughly was he animated by his cause, so truly did he possess the spirit of the latter-day social reformer, that the fact of his enemies being absent miles away made no difference to him. He simply stabbed away.

On the further side, over the spectators' heads, was a bandstand in which were ranged sixteen drummers and two trumpeters. The drums were all very large ones. Under the bandstand, and in front of the spectators, were seated a number of journalists, who were busily taking notes of the proceedings. A few of them were doing it as a matter of business; but the greater part of them appeared to be genuinely impressed by the pro-

ceedings, and some of them were enthusiastically sympathetic.

The horse rolled magnificently backward and forward on its wooden stand, and when the rider executed some daring feat, the trumpets blew a fanfare, the drums boomed out their thunder, the journalists quickened their pencils, and the spectators burst into torrents of applause.

"There's horsemanship for you!" exclaimed a burly man at my elbow, in the intervals of shouting "Bravo," and clapping his hands.

"Yes, indeed!" I cordially assented. I am something of a horseman myself, but I have a natural aversion from all argument, and it pains me to destroy people's illusions.

"And what a horse!" he enthusiastically continued.

"Yes, what a horse!" I agreed.

The spectators applauded more wildly than ever. Pegasus rocked backward and forward on his stand, attaining a larger segment of the circle at each roll; the rider spurred and hacked more fiercely. I have rarely seen greater enthusiasm.

"Can you tell me the name of this building?" I asked of my burly neighbour.

"This is the Theatre of Ideas," he replied. "You might have known that from the statues."

I then perceived that the large brand-new statues in the front were those of members of our most recent schools of publicists, politicians,

essayists, dramatists, and novelists; but I could not recognize the small bust in the background. After a little peering, I discovered that it was a slightly damaged image of Shakespeare. He was placidly and blankly staring at the rider of Pegasus.

"What is the gentleman on horseback hacking at?" I asked of my neighbour.

"He knows!" was the emphatic response. "Some part of our social system. What does it matter which? There are plenty of social abuses to be reformed."

I suppose my features must have conveyed some expression of doubt or bewilderment, for he severely inquired: "You don't deny that there are heaps of social abuses that loudly cry for reform?"

"No, no," I hastily responded.

"Then what does it matter where we begin?"

I saw that I was going to get the worst of the argument, so I edged a little away. He came fiercely up to me.

"You don't seem to be very partial to Ideas," he remarked.

"Oh yes, I am," I protested. "I love them, but——"

I stopped nervously.

"But *what!*" he threateningly demanded, with a tremendous emphasis on the "what." "Are

there, or are there not, social abuses that cry out for instant reform?"

The man was evidently a skilled debater. I dislike very much to be posed in this way by persons of an intelligence superior to my own, so I thought it prudent to change the subject.

"He rides well," I said, appeasingly.

"I should think he does ride well," was the answer.

"And the horse has good points," I added.

He grunted a kind of assent, and I moved further away.

I discovered afterwards that neither my burly neighbour, nor any of the other spectators, had the least suspicion that the horse was not a real live horse.

I thought I should like to go over the building and learn something of its aims and policy and methods. I therefore inquired for one of the directors, whose name was printed in very large letters on several notices that were posted about the place. I was taken up to him and told him I should like to look round the place. He showed the most amiable readiness to meet my wishes, and said that, as he happened to be free, he would himself show me over the institution, and explain its working. I thanked him very much.

"What do you think of the architecture of our Theatre of Ideas?" was his first sentence.

"It is very imposing on the outside," I said.

"Nobody could fail to be impressed by the facade."

"We have taken many of the features of the building from the Theatre of Ideas in Laputa," he said; "in fact, we have modelled ourselves very much on them in all our arrangements."

"I suppose they are making great advances over there," I said.

He lifted his eyes and made a gesture of helpless admiration, unable to express itself in words.

"But we are rapidly catching them up," he remarked cheerfully. "Our range of subjects for discussion is already almost as wide as theirs, and our debates are quite as exhaustive and inconclusive. Then, again, we have opened negotiations with the House of Commons to take over all its purely vocal functions, so as to leave it free to register the decrees of the Government without a single word being spoken by any member."

I said I thought that this would advance the business of the nation.

"Yes, indeed," he exclaimed, "they haven't got as far as that in Laputa."

I asked what hopes he had of bringing the negotiations with the House of Commons to a successful issue.

"Well," he replied, "if our work here continues to be as successful as it has been, I think

26 THE THEATRE OF IDEAS

it quite possible that in three years all the important affairs of the nation will be voiced here."

I had a little shiver. I do not know why—a mere respect for the proper use of nouns and verbs will scarcely account for it—but the moment any writer or speaker begins to "voice" this matter or the other, I get a little cold shiver. The fact is, I cannot help suspecting him—and it may be a very cruel and unjust suspicion on my part—but I cannot help suspecting him of being a member of the National Liberal Club.

My eyes wandered round the building.

"Have you any suggestions to make?" he said.

"No, no," I replied. "Those are magnificent statues."

"Aren't they?" he cordially acquiesced.

"Don't you admire their expressions and poses?"

I said that I did, and that I was profoundly impressed by the superbly flamboyant and confident attitude of the Polyfadistie Impossiblist in the centre.

"It is his invariable attitude," said the Director. "He never changes it for a single moment."

I said that it must be a little trying and tiring sometimes.

"Not to himself," the Director answered.

I looked at them again.

"Westminster Abbey has a remarkable collection of statues," I said; "but it contains nothing approaching to these."

He agreed with me and seemed to be pleased. My eyes wandered again round the building.

"You were going to make some observation," he prompted.

And seeing that I hesitated, he added encouragingly: "Speak quite openly. Remember this is the Theatre of Ideas."

"Well, of course they are a splendid group," I hazarded, "but don't you think the place needs a little more solid useful furniture?"

He said he thought not, and that in his opinion the statue of the Polyfadtistic Impossiblist alone was quite enough to furnish a Theatre of Ideas.

"The place would look dismally empty without him," I remarked.

At that moment a rocket fizzed up and all the lights suddenly jetted out in a blinding flash, and as suddenly went down again. All the spectators, like myself, gave a little startled jump.

"What do you think of our system of lighting?" he inquired.

"I should have supposed that in a Theatre of Ideas," I replied, "you would have taken care to have a steady luminous glow."

"Oh no! Oh no! Oh no!" he demurred. "We find it much more effective to keep the place dimly lighted, and then suddenly to blaze out in an unexpected flash, with a rocket or two. It's far more dazzling to our spectators. It enables them to catch glimpses of more things than are

dreamed of in Heaven and Earth. A constant equable radiance of light would scarcely be noticed, and would tend to show things as they really are. It would be in no way superior to ordinary sunlight."

"That's quite true," I concurred. "I see now that your system of lighting is admirably suited to the Theatre of Ideas."

The rider was still hacking backward and forward, and making thrusts at his enemy.

"May I ask what that gentleman is hacking at?" I asked.

"I'm not quite sure," he answered; "I believe it is either private property or marriage. I'll inquire."

He went up to an attendant and questioned him.

On his return he said: "I find it's vaccination we are attacking to-day. Can I give you any more information?"

"Well, I do not wish to seem critical," I replied; "but isn't it a pity that you don't have real horses?"

"Oh we do, occasionally," he said. "And we have one or two riders who can almost manage them. We started with the intention of having none but real horses, but we met with constant accidents and tumbles. The spectators got alarmed. Our difficulty was to find a supply of practised riders. We had guaranteed our sub-

scribers a constant exhibition of feats of daring horsemanship. We had to keep faith with them. You wouldn't have us disappoint the crowd of advanced and intelligent persons who have supported us all through?"

"No, indeed," I cordially responded.

"So we have gradually substituted horses of the type you see here."

"And haven't your audiences any suspicion?" I asked, "that they are not real horses?"

"Very few of them can distinguish between the two types," he replied. "The great majority of our subscribers, especially our lady supporters, prefer the rocking horses, as they are less dangerous and troublesome animals to handle. Would you like to see where we manufacture them?"

"I should, very much," was my reply.

He took me into the workshop of the building, and showed me several horses in various stages of being manufactured. Three or four of them were finished, and were placed near the centre of the room. Several young horsemen were busily trying to throw a lasso over their heads, and when one of them succeeded, a murmur of admiration went round the workshop.

On the floor, approaching completion, was a huge dappled-gray mare of the massive build and proportions of a cart-horse, and rather larger than life-size.

"That seems to be a useful animal," I remarked.

"Yes, we expect him to be a great favourite with our audiences."

"Him?" I exclaimed. "It's a mare!"

"We avoid all sex distinctions in the Theatre of Ideas. We find they are very objectionable and humiliating to the majority of our lady subscribers."

I had a slight buzzing in my ears, and the building began to go round slowly.

"She—a—he looks to be capable of great exertion without fatigue," I observed.

"We rarely find that our horses are fatigued," he said. "And we ride them constantly day and night. But unfortunately, nearly all our riders suffer from great shortness of breath after they have been riding a few months."

We strolled round to the other side of the animal. A workman was nailing on its mane with large, resplendent burnished nails. The Director told me that the heads of the nails were of solid gold, so determined were they to have great richness of detail, and not to scamp anything. Another workman was engaged in painting "BUCEPH" on its—her—his hind-quarters.

"I like the names you give your horses," I said, wishing to praise where praise was due.

"Yes," he replied, "it lends a touch of poetry and imagination to the whole scheme. There's

no reason that a Theatre of Ideas should be destitute of poetry and imagination."

"None whatever," I heartily assented.

As we came out of the workshop he proposed to show me over the library. I expressed my pleasure, and he led me across the building. We were stopped by one of the journalists, who came up to him with a bundle of notes that he had just written. I noticed that the journalist ducked as he passed the flamboyant figure of the Polyfadtistic Impossiblist, and showed evident symptoms of terror. The Director explained that some time before, a group of journalists had been discussing the incessantly rampant attitude of the figure, when it had suddenly tilted over and fallen upon them. Two of them had been in the hospital for paralysis ever since, and a third was being cared for in a home for the feeble-minded.

We crossed the building and entered the library, which was a large and bare room, and, like the main building, was very dimly lighted.

To my surprise all the shelves were filled with books of a uniform height, bound in thin blue paper.

"We have perhaps the most select, and at the same time the most useful and inspiring library in the world," said the Director. He took down a volume and handed it to me. It was a Parliamentary Blue Book, reporting an ingenious invention to carry urban drainage through the air

by means of aeroplanes, thus avoiding the present pollution of the soil.

"Are they all Parliamentary Blue Books?" I inquired, looking at the shelves.

"We admit nothing else," he replied. "Where could you find so many Ideas packed in a form so convenient for our purpose?"

He restored the book to its shelf, and said a few words of encouragement to a pale young student who was passionately absorbed in a large, thick blue volume. From their conversation I learned that the student was busy with the report of a Committee, who had been sitting to consider the abolition of the middle and upper classes, by forcing every one whose income exceeded £400 a year to wear an anti-oxygenic respirator, which would painlessly stifle the wearer in about twenty-five minutes.

The Director asked me what I thought of this proposal. I replied that it seemed to me altogether too mild a way of dealing with these malefactors; and that I feared that many of them would be crafty enough to escape by secreting oxygen, or by taking in air when nobody was looking. He said that they had foreseen this possibility, and that, to provide against it, the State would appoint a Special Commissioner to attend every individual member of the middle and upper classes, in order to see that the law was not evaded. This simple plan, while it would extir-

pate the noxious middle and upper classes, would also find easy remunerative occupation for the unemployed. With this end in view, it was proposed to fix the salary of each Special Commissioner at a thousand pounds a year. I suggested that it would be better to bleed each criminal to death by some slow and lingering process; this would more clearly show our abhorrence of the crime, and at the same time it would be more economical. He replied that we need not think of the economical aspect of the question, as the State could always be drawn upon for a great National Necessity like this. I agreed that so long as our end was attained, it scarcely mattered by what means we attained it; but that, for my part, I thought drastic and vindictive methods were urgently required, or we should still find that somebody would contrive to be better off than somebody else. The subject then dropped.

“They appear to be terribly in earnest,” I said, glancing at the rows of students seated along the tables, and all profoundly engaged in kindred tasks.

“We are all terribly in earnest in the Theatre of Ideas,” the Director answered. I observed that as soon as a student had mastered a page of his Blue Book he tore it off, and placed it carefully in a basket beside him. At intervals an attendant came round, collected all the pages, and

took them off at a side door. I asked the Director what was done with the pages so collected.

"They are placed in a machine which tears them into pieces about an inch square," he replied. "These are all emptied into a large tub and mixed with equal quantities of bran and chaff. Sufficient water is added to make the various elements soluble. Carefully calculated doses of calomel and senna are stirred into the mass until they thoroughly permeate it. It is then packed in hermetically sealed tins and placed in a refrigerator, to prevent contamination by any outside germs. After a week in the refrigerator it is ready for consumption."

"Consumption by whom?" I asked.

"By the entire staff of the institution, except the attendants, porters, and messengers," he replied. "After a number of experiments, we have found that it is the only diet which adequately stimulates and regulates our faculties, so as to render them fit to deal with the complicated questions that hourly present themselves in the Theatre of Ideas."

As we reëntered the main hall I noticed with some alarm that the buzzing in my ears had increased, and that the building was quickening its rotatory movement. I had to steady myself against the door-post for a moment.

"Ah! you have a curious sense of mental and spiritual exhilaration?" the Director cheerily re-

marked, noticing that my movements were becoming a little uncertain.

"I can't say that I have," I answered. "The fact is, I have a fearful buzzing in my ears."

He seemed to be pleased at this.

"Any feeling of vertigo?" he cordially inquired.

"Yes, I feel rather dizzy," I replied. He nodded approvingly.

"Perhaps some slight premonition of nausea, as in the first stage of seasickness?" he suggested.

"Yes—something like that," I confessed.

He nodded still more approvingly.

"That is what we call mental and spiritual exhilaration in the Theatre of Ideas," he said. "These are all welcome and encouraging signs that the place is exercising its benign influence on you. It casts the same spell upon nearly all who enter its portals. The mere name, 'Theatre of Ideas' has been known to cause a species of intellectual intoxication. How do you feel now?"

I said I should like to sit down. He conducted me to a seat against the side wall.

"It's the inrush of Ideas upon an unprepared mind," he explained.

I said I thought it must be.

"It generally happens so upon the first visit. But come often enough, and you'll find that all your movements and perceptions will gradually

36 THE THEATRE OF IDEAS

adapt themselves to the conditions which we have established."

Just then a man who had been earnestly watching the swaying figure of Pegasus, suddenly tried to stand on his head. He was not very successful, but he persevered and made continued attempts. The spectators cheered and encouraged him, and another man, who had watched his efforts approvingly, made a vigorous dive at the floor, and attempted to balance himself upright as soon as his head touched the ground. In a few minutes a dozen men were frantically imitating the feat. So infectious is the enthusiasm for Ideas. None of them succeeded in keeping his legs in the air for longer than a bare second or so, until at length one of them, taking advantage of the angle formed by my seat and the wall against which it was backed, managed, after immense exertion, to prop himself there, with his feet swaying dangerously over my head. He sustained himself in that position for a considerable time, giving me an occasional involuntary kick, for which he apologized, explaining that it was impossible for a man standing on his head to exercise a steady control over his actions. This seemed to be so reasonable that I readily accepted his apologies. I congratulated him upon having been able to carry his Idea into practice, whereas most of the possessors of Ideas are content with merely talking or writing about them.

He was so elated by his success that he did not seem to feel the increasing pain and inconvenience of his posture. Indeed, he invited me to take up a similar position on the other side of my seat, where a corresponding advantageous angle was formed by its junction with the wall. I declined, and asked him what was to be gained by standing on one's head?

"It gives you an entirely new view of things," he said, between the gasps and breaks which his position enforced upon him. And with great discomfort, and at some risk of breaking his neck, he went on to argue that men who habitually walked upon their legs were bound to see everything in its ordinary conventional aspect, and to regulate their actions accordingly. This was unanswerable, and I did not attempt a reply.

He raised himself a little on the palms of his hands, and shifted his head so as to get a better outlook upon the row of statues on the pedestals.

"How do they appear to you from that point of view?" asked the Director, who had encouragingly and sympathetically watched his proceedings.

"Almost sublime," he replied. "When you stand on your legs and look at them, they do not seem to be much more than human beings, but when you see them from this point of vantage they enlarge themselves till they—"

He stopped from the mere physical difficulty

of launching a hyperbole in that position. The Director screwed his head round and down, first to one side and then to another, and tried to get a view of the statues as they appeared to the man whose head was on the floor.

"They certainly seem to gain in importance when you look at them sideways," said the Director.

The man on the floor insisted that they gained even more in importance when you looked at them topsy-turvy, and begged the Director to have the statues rearranged on that formula. The Director promised to make some experiments with the statues, and to arrange them in different ways, until he discovered what angle of inclination would best suit the idiosyncrasy of each member of the group.

I have since learned that the Director was as good as his word, for last week I had an opportunity of questioning a friend who had visited the Theatre of Ideas only the day before. From what he told me, it appeared that the Director had taken infinite trouble to rearrange the statues in a manner that would show them to the best advantage, and that would also be most agreeable to the originals. A small committee had waited upon the Polyfadtistic Impossiblist and had asked him how he would like his statue to be placed. He had replied that any man must be a myopic lunatic if he did not know that all statues

looked best when they stood upside down, and that it was nothing less than a National disgrace and an insult to sculpture that all our public statues were still allowed to remain in an upright position. He added that nothing could reconcile him to the exhibition of his statue with its head upward, except a general reversal of all other statues. If such a reversal took place, he should immediately change his views, and insist that his statue should be placed on its feet. He then expressed himself very strongly upon vivisection, and the Committee withdrew, much impressed.

All this my friend told me he had elicited from the same amiable Director who had previously shown me round. In reply to my further questions, my friend said that upon his recent visit the Polyfadtistic Impossiblist had, according to his wishes, been placed in an exactly vertical position with his feet upward; and that this attitude insured him universal respect and admiration. The other statues were tentatively on their feet, but at various slants; one of them was not more than twenty-five degrees from the perpendicular. I inquired of my friend what had become of the small bust in the background. He could not remember, but he thought it was still in an upright position. This was what I learned only a week ago.

To return to my own visit to the Theatre of

Ideas. After some misadventures, the man on his head balanced himself precariously against my seat and the wall. He claimed that this attitude gave him an astounding lucidity of mind, and revealed to him many things that escape the notice of those who all their lives are content to narrow their outlook, and walk about this wonderful world upon their feet.

I asked him if he did not find the posture very painful and uncomfortable. He said that he did, but that martyrs to Ideas must expect to put up with hardships. He again pressed me to take up a similar position, but I refused very emphatically. He then called me a Trilobite. With that our conversation ended. A Trilobite, I afterward learned, is a crab-like creature which existed in the Paleozoic Period, and has been extinct since the close of the Carboniferous.

Meantime the other anti-pedestrians had been endeavouring to sustain the same attitude, but without much success. They seemed, however, to be undaunted by failure, for every now and then I caught sight of a pair of boots waggling uncertainly for a moment between the shoulders of the spectators. A lady had her nose and cheek severely bruised by a sudden collision with the hob-nailed toe of one of these enthusiasts. The lady indignantly protested. The man looked up at her from the ground and tried to explain, but before he could get the words out, his other boot

had violently descended and caught her a severe blow in the eye. She was very angry and left the building. So resentful are ordinary persons of the impact of Ideas; so unwilling to endure the slightest inconvenience from their operation.

And now an incident occurred of the greatest significance, as showing the penetrating quickness of woman's intellect, and the ready superiority of her reasoning faculties. Whatever little doubt I may have previously had on this matter, I have had none since; and I am glad to pay this full and handsome tribute of submission. A very beautiful and quietly dressed woman with a well-bred air and a gentle, attractive mien, had been watching with great interest the efforts of the men to stand upon their heads. With startling eagerness, she suddenly tucked up her skirts to her knees, bent down her head, and thrust it between her calves, as through a horse collar. This gave her a splendid opportunity of seeing things upside down, without the pain and trouble of standing upon her head. A very curious and unexpected result followed from her action. The moment she saw things upside down, she began to squeal out incoherently for her rights.

I was watching her with extravagant admiration, when the Director touched me in a kindly way on the shoulder, and said that he had many more interesting things to show me. I rose cautiously, but found that the whole building was

now revolving so quickly that it would be inadvisable for me to move. The buzzing in the ears was also increasing in an alarming way.

"Come along," he said in a tone of gentle command. "You mustn't leave without seeing our Pithecoïdic Academy."

I made a strong effort and followed him across the main hall. I was glad, however, to lean on the railings of an alley that ran along the further side of the building. It had much the same shape and proportions as a bowling alley; the only marked difference being that the space where the ninepins are placed was occupied by a solidly built brick wall, about ten feet high and quite four feet thick. A number of young men were partially stripping themselves at the lower end of the alley. As I halted to watch their proceedings the Director rejoined me.

"These are our stalwarts," he said. "This is the most severe discipline our subscribers are called upon to undergo, and puts the greatest strain on their allegiance to Ideas."

Each young man, when he had divested himself of his outer garments, appeared in a brilliant blue and white athletic costume. He then went up to a table, on which were lying a great number of india-rubber skull caps, made to fit over the entire cranium, and to cover completely the eyes and ears. I handled some of these skull caps, and found that they were of varying thicknesses, from

a mere skin to a hard two-inch coating of rubber. Each young stalwart fitted himself with a cap, and carefully pulled it over his eyes and ears, so that he was able to concentrate himself on his mission without the risk of distraction. He then stationed himself at the starting post, waved his arms blindly in the air, and burst into the triumphant notes of a fiery tune, which seemed to be a reminiscent compound of the "Marseillaise" and "Onward, Christian Soldiers." After a pause at the end of the tune, he shouted "Victory" three times, tightened his muscles, bent his head forward, rushed up the alley at his fiercest speed, and butted furiously into the brick wall at the end. The result of this was generally to stun him for a considerable time, varying from a few minutes to half an hour, according to the thickness of his skull, the protection he received from his cap, and the practice and skill with which he executed the manœuvre. As soon as he lay stunned upon the floor, two attendants came, picked him up, and carried him into an adjoining dressing-room, where they took off his skull cap, bathed his head, and administered restoratives. When he had sufficiently recovered, he walked down the alley to the cheers of the spectators; put on his skull cap, and again stationed himself at the starting post. After the song and shouts of "Victory," he once more addressed himself to the brick wall.

"A very severe discipline," said the Director, as one young stalwart was carried into the dressing-room for the fifth time.

"Yes, indeed," I assented. "What is the object of it?"

The Director replied that many of these young men were destined to be politicians, and that this training fitted them to meet in an unconquerable spirit the obstacles they were likely to encounter in a political career. He said that none but the stoutest hearts and thickest skulls could survive it; and that their prize pupil was a member of the present government, who often came and practised for an hour or two in their alley before introducing a bill into the House of Commons. He deplored, however, the waning courage of the present generation of stalwarts. Few of them, he said, took more than three turns at the brick wall in any one day; while only one out of ten persevered through the entire course of six years; most of them, indeed, dropping out of the ranks at the end of two or three years. I said that a three years' course would satisfy all my own aspirations to distinguish myself in that way.

There came up to us a very old man in black clothes, with silver hair that fell carelessly over a head that was so battered and pushed out of shape in all directions, that it looked like a grotesque mass of pulp, and was only recognizable

as a head from the position it occupied on the top of his shoulders. The Director received him with the respect due to honourable old age.

“May I take my usual turn?” the old gentleman anxiously inquired, after greetings had been exchanged.

“By all means,” replied the amiable Director; and he arranged that the group of waiting young stalwarts should stand aside, and leave the alley free for the exploits of the old gentleman. With trembling hands the old man unstripped himself, and soon appeared in a gorgeous blue and white gladiatorial dress, that showed strangely enough under the silver hair and the battered, misshapen cranium. The Director whispered me that the plucky old fellow’s head had taken its present contour as the result of sixty-five years’ practice at a brick wall, generally the one at the bottom of his back garden. But his own brick wall having a mere seven-inch thickness, they allowed him as a courtesy to fortify himself by taking an occasional turn at the more impregnable obstruction at the end of the alley.

The old man sang the hymn in a quavering voice but with great spirit, and was shouting “Victory,” when I was moved to a protest, and earnestly begged him to desist from knocking his head still further out of shape. The Director hushed me down, and taking me aside, expostulated with me.

"He doesn't know his head is out of shape," the Director whispered. "Better leave him in ignorance."

"But," I protested, "he'll have a serious concussion. Look! He isn't putting on a skull cap."

The Director again tried to quiet me by explaining that the old gentleman was a very eminent theologian, and therefore whatever injuries he received, he was quite incapable of feeling them. He added that this happy imperviousness to injury, which all theologians possess, enables them to pursue this severe exercise with their skulls quite unprotected. He implored me to leave the old gentleman alone, and to accompany him to the Pithecoïdic Academy, which he was sure would interest me. I learned afterward that the old gentleman had taken the highest degrees in Divinity in all the European universities, and had a reputation for scholarship that extended over three continents.

As I cautiously followed the Director with an increasing unsteadiness of gait, I asked him for some information as to the nature and aims of this Pithecoïdic Academy. He said that by the mere accidents of development and environment, the anthropoid apes had been deprived of their rightful status of humanity, with the attendant privilege of voting. Had it not been for this cruel caprice of Nature, the younger members of the foremost Simian families would now be en-

joying the advantages of Popular Education, and many of the elder members would be occupying responsible positions to which they were justly entitled, and for which they were manifestly qualified—such as leading popular processions, and representing their fellow creatures in Parliament. They were trying, he informed me, in their Pithecoidic Academy to remedy the injustice and hardships which the Simian races had endured for countless generations, by giving the younger members of the various groups a sound knowledge of the higher mathematics.

I asked him what results he expected to attain from this curriculum. He replied that they needed skilled carpenters to make their rocking-horses, and that the best preparation for the trade of a practical carpenter was a thorough acquaintance with the laws of Algebra. He confessed, however, that they had only been partially successful, for Nature again seemed to take a malicious delight in interposing mental barriers and limitations which prevented the young anthropoids from mastering the Calculus of Equivalent Statements. I said that in this respect their *protégés* were in no wise behind the general run of educated mankind. I added that, in my opinion, the Calculus of Permutable Abstractions offered a better means of training a carpenter or handiercraftsman than the Calculus of Equivalent Statements. He agreed that as their scholars

could not understand the Calculus of Equivalent Statements, it would be wise to start them upon something more abstruse and difficult, so as to draw out their faculties. With this end in view, the Directorate had under consideration the Calculus of Unconditioned Possibilities. He asked my opinion of this Calculus as an instrument of Popular Education. I said that in the present temper and condition of the people it appeared to be even more suitable than the Calculus of Permutable Abstractions.*

"Yes," he pursued, "I cannot imagine a better way to prepare our masses for the practical duties and business of life than to ground them thoroughly in the Calculus of Unconditioned Possibilities."

I agreed that it would fit them for every emergency and contingency. I further pointed out that it would enable them to deal with our constantly recurring political crises.

"That is what we feel," he fervently exclaimed. "And how much better it would be if every carpenter in the kingdom were able to cope with a political crisis, than that he should be able to make a beautiful chair, or a well-fitting drawer."

I said that in this respect we had nothing to grumble at, for whereas it was getting increas-

* See letters on Popular Education in the Educational Supplement of the London "Times," 6 Jan., 1914.

ingly difficult to find a table drawer that would slide easily into its place, the number of unskilled workmen who were capable of dealing with a political crisis was rapidly increasing, and would shortly be commensurate with the entire population.

My remark seemed to stimulate him to action, for he immediately declared that they would set all their most backward pupils to work upon the Calculus of Unconditioned Possibilities the very next morning.

I applauded this resolution, and said that it promised great results at the present time, when already the Calculus of Unconditioned Possibilities was the favorite text-book of some of our leading statesmen. It now only remained for the masses to yet further assist our legislators in drawing deductions from the same source, and to embody them in the statute book. This done, I said our country would be a very pleasant place for all of us to live in.

As we finished this profitable conversation, we passed through the doors of the Pithecoïdic Academy. Upon our entrance a great noise of chattering prevailed, which the Director hushed down with difficulty. My attention was caught by a young chimpanzee who was absorbed in the contents of his class-book. I asked what he was studying so eagerly, and was told that he was engaged upon the forty-seventh proposition of the

First Book of Euclid, with a view to fitting himself for carrying loads of bricks to the bricklayers of the new annex to the Theatre of Ideas. I happened to look over his shoulders and discovered that he was really devouring a story of pirates in a six-penny magazine, which he had slipped between the covers of his class-book. I pointed this out to the Director, who observed that they constantly met with similar discouragements. "For instance," he said, "it is a curious fact that a course of classical history always develops in a young anthropoid a taste for Mr. Tinfoil's novels; and any increase of members in our Latin and Greek classes instantly raises the circulation of 'Snipbits' at the bookstall outside." This staggered me a little, and I asked whether, for the present, it might not, after all, be advisable to adapt our system of education to the mental capacities, and to the future vocations of the scholars. He replied that if we trained our future builders and carpenters in such an antiquated fashion, we could expect nothing better from them than monstrous abortions like Salisbury and Lincoln cathedrals, and the hideous wood carving of Grinling Gibbons. He further pointed out that the less their scholars learned and understood of their everyday work, the more highly developed became their sense of self-esteem. And he held that unless the sense of self-esteem was cultivated and allowed free play, these young anthropoids

would never take their places as useful members of a properly organized society.

At that moment it flashed across me that I had an appointment with the Collector of Rates, with whom I had a dispute as to the amount due from me for the purpose of National Education. I mentioned this to the Director, and asked him if he could tell me the hour, at the same time making it a pretext for leaving the Pithecoidic Academy, which, after the momentary hush the Director had secured on our entrance, had again become a wild babel of chatter and confusion.

"The time? I'll tell you," he replied. "But before you go, I must take you into our Sanctuary of Perpetual Peace."

I said I was overdue to keep my appointment with the Rate Collector.

"But this is our greatest achievement—or will be when it is finished," he continued. "I really cannot let you leave the Theatre of Ideas without showing you our arrangements for securing Perpetual Peace all the world over. I hope you are an advocate of Universal Peace?"

I answered most emphatically that I was. I said that a few weeks before I had imprudently ventured upon a personal encounter with a powerful ruffian whom I had detected in the act of stealing my watch. The result was that I had received a ferocious mauling at his hands, and had lost my watch. The affair had made so deep an

impression upon my mind, and upon my nose, that I had thereupon resolved to be a man of peace for the remainder of my life.

"Come along then," he said, and helped my uncertain steps across the hall to a large open door over which was inscribed, "SANCTUARY OF PERPETUAL PEACE."

On the way he confided to me that this wing of their institution was founded and supported by an anonymous donor, who up to the age of seventy had led a notorious and successful career as bandit and pirate on an international scale. Having amassed a huge fortune by this means, he had thereupon seen the error of his ways, and being stricken by conscience, he had determined to make some atonement. He had therefore devoted one-tenth of all he possessed to the promotion of universal peace, and a further tenth to the succour of orphans whose parents had died from hydrophobia. The Director told me that this aged philanthropist had already lived to see the fulfilment of one half of his benevolent aspirations; inasmuch as, owing to his princely gifts, it was now impossible to find throughout the length and breadth of Great Britain a single orphan of any victim to hydrophobia, who was not handsomely and indeed luxuriously provided for to the end of life. The Director added that if this venerable benefactor of his species could but live to see the inauguration of an era of uni-

versal peace and thus realize the other half of his aspirations, he would be content to die in the blessed thought that he had not lived in vain.

"What is his present age?" I inquired.

"Eighty-seven," the Director replied.

I said that I devoutly hoped his wishes would be realized. I declared it would be monstrous for the nations of Europe to allow this aged philanthropist to die unsolaced by the conviction that his efforts had been crowned with success, and that war was henceforth impossible.

With that we passed through the portals of the Sanctuary of Perpetual Peace. Our entry was unnoticed in the hubbub of high tongues and violent gestures that was proceeding at the other end of the room. The Director explained that at present their work in this department was only in its third year, and that constant disputes and confusions arose, owing to their difficulties in settling the principles upon which perpetual universal peace was to be secured and maintained. Until these underlying principles were formulated and subscribed to, it was natural that there should be some transient discords between the Professors who were busily engaged in establishing them.

"But," the Director continued, "when once our main principles are formulated, and the broad lines of our policy laid down, we have only

to get all the politicians and the peoples to agree to them, and our task will be accomplished.”

I said that ought not to be difficult.

“Meantime,” the Director pursued in a tone of cheery confidence, “a little wrangling, or even a few occasional blows among ourselves, is a very small matter, if only the great consummation of Universal Perpetual Peace can be obtained.”

I concurred, and added that for my own part, I was a reasonable man, and would willingly compound the matter, and take a modest instalment on account—say an undertaking that would secure European peace for the next thirty years.

The Director shook his head, and said that the Sanctuary of Perpetual Peace was endowed upon the most uncompromising basis; its venerable founder having seen so much of the misery and evils of bloodshed during his seventy years as bandit and pirate, that he was quite resolved to accept no solution of the question short of Perpetual Peace all the world over. To this end he had spared no expense in endowing the Institution with Professorial Chairs that were filled by men of the highest attainments in Social Science and Philosophy.

Our conversation had been carried on with great difficulty, for not only had the hubbub at the end of the room increased in violence, but all the time a shattering din came from a side room,

as of clanging hammers beating on anvils in iron-works. Over the door of this side room was sculptured a dove bearing an olive branch, with the text underneath, "Wisdom is better than Weapons of War."

Amidst the uproar, the Director went on to give me some information about the learned Professors who were the guiding spirits of the place. He kindly raised his voice to a shout, while I formed an ear-trumpet with one hand, and with the other clung to a table to steady myself; for all the while the building continued to roll round at increasing speed. In this position, after frequent misunderstandings, I managed to learn that the Sanctuary of Perpetual Peace was controlled by a small committee of three, Professor Poap, Professor Pugg, and Professor Meake. The Professor pointed out a thick-set, sallow complexioned man of fifty, with a massive forehead, scowling eyes, heavy jaws, and a baggy countenance as Professor Poap.

Professor Poap was rolling out a succession of ungracious adjectives and epithets, which seemed to be directed at a fierce, dapper, red-haired, clean shaven little man, who was barking and gesticulating at him across the body of a beaming old fellow with rosy cheeks, and white woolly hair and whiskers. This latter I gathered was Professor Meake. He had the features and air of a benevolent old sheep, so much so, that when

he opened his mouth, I quite expected him to bleat.

Professor Meake faced alternately about to Professor Poap and to the voluble angry little man, and seemed to be soothing some quarrel between them, so far as the clatter and confusion permitted me to judge.

"That little man is Professor Pugg," the Director bawled in my ear. "P-u-u-u-g-g," he shouted.

"The one who is shaking his fist?" I inquired in a rising shriek.

"Y-e-e-e-s-s," answered the Director, in a necessarily louder key. "P-u-u-u-g-g. He has his moments of excitement—e-x-x-c-i-i-i-t-e-m-e-e-e-n-t when he is filled with righteous anger at the violence and wrong that are p-e-e-e-r-pe-tr-a-a-a-ted on the face of the earth."

I tried, so far as my vocal powers were equal to the task, to assure the Director that I had every sympathy with Professor Pugg.

At that moment Professor Pugg dealt a nimble blow which was intended for the obnoxious Poap, but which lighted inopportunely on the cheek of the intervening Meake. I endeavoured to express my sorrow that blows which are intended to redress the violence and wrong that are perpetrated upon the face of the earth so often light upon the cheeks of innocent persons.

A crowd of auxiliary students, clerks and at-

tendants, who had gradually been gathering on either side according to the bias of their opinions, now joined in the fray until it became general at that end of the room. After much jostling and reerimination, Meake contrived to lead Pugg into a corner, where he gradually quieted him down; while the auxiliaries, after exchanging some rude remarks and a few vicious blows, dispersed and settled to their tasks, the Puggites on one side of the room and the Poapites on the other. The comparative quiet which now obtained permitted the Director to lower his voice, and to give me some further information, interrupted only by the incessant clang of the hammers in the side room.

"These little skirmishes," the Director explained, "will happen occasionally. We welcome them as showing the strength of conviction which animates our Professors. However regrettable in themselves, they are a happy augury for the ultimate realization of our Great Idea of Perpetual Peace all the world over. It is impossible that men who are so much in earnest can fail in the end to find a solution."

I assented, and said that when men were so much in earnest as to punch each other's heads, a solution of the question was bound to follow sooner or later.

"Our little difficulties," the Director went on, "arise from the fact that it is necessary to ap-

proach a problem of this magnitude from all points of view. We therefore decided to select representatives of all schools of thought, so that the matter might be thoroughly thrashed out before we decided upon our course of action. We were fortunate enough to secure men of such equal ability and renown, and at the same time of such varying outlook, as Professor Poap, Professor Pugg and Professor Meake."

At that moment Pugg made an attempt to escape from the corner where Meake was holding him, but being restrained, contented himself with making a threatening gesture over Meake's shoulder at Poap. Poap was standing in a sublime inflated attitude in the middle of the room, puffing out his sallow cheeks to their utmost capacity, and then drawing them in, as alternate symbols of his own importance, and of the contempt he felt for Pugg. The hammering clatter in the next room never ceased, but I was able to hear what the Director said without any great strain.

"There is much to be said for Pugg's fundamental contention," the Director remarked.

I asked what was Pugg's fundamental contention.

"On the other hand, Poap has made out an unanswerable case," the Director observed.

Poap blew out an enormous volume of wind

from his cheeks, as though dispersing Pugg in atoms through space.

"An absolutely unanswerable, unassailable case," the Director mused.

I asked for some details of Poap's absolutely unanswerable, unassailable case.

"And yet Pugg has the facts on his side," the Director allowed.

I said it was sad to reflect in how many human affairs all the reason was on one side and all the facts on the other.

"Yes, Pugg excels in marshalling his facts, but Poap is supreme in marshalling his arguments," the Director summed up.

I asked what Meake's position was, and whether he had any plans or views on the matter; for his face was so amiably devoid of any expression or intention that it did not seem probable he could form any definite views upon any question whatever; or if he could, that his opinions could have any force or weight.

"Meake's attitude," the Director replied, "is of immense value to our Cause, because of its adaptability to all persons, circumstances, developments, and possibilities. Meake has enormous resiliency which makes him invulnerable. Meake is our standby, whatever happens. Meake is always in harmony with the situation; always in touch with all men and all things."

I scarcely knew what to reply to this, but I

thought I should be right in saying that Meake was a useful and handy man to have about the place.

"He is indeed," the Director cordially assented. "I'm not sure whether our Cause will not be finally won by Meake's methods, rather than by Pugg's or Poap's. Pugg relies upon facts. Poap relies upon arguments. Meake avoids both facts and arguments. What is the result? At the outset Meake finds himself secure from all opposition, secure from all entanglements of word or deed."

I was much taken with this. I said I was convinced that the shortest, perhaps the only way to establish Perpetual Peace all the world over, was to approach the subject by resolutely avoiding all facts and arguments that stand in the way of so desirable a consummation.

"Still," the Director continued, "we must not altogether leave out of sight the present low mental and moral level of the masses of mankind."

I agreed that it might be advisable to keep this in mind before settling the question.

"And having regard to the deplorable state of human affairs at the present moment, there is great warrant for Pugg's fundamental contention."

I again asked for some exposition of Pugg's fundamental contention.

“Pugg’s fundamental contention is that War invariably arises from the discontent, greed, selfishness, pride, envy, folly, lust, blindness, ambition, or cruelty of mankind.”

I said that Pugg had hit the nail on the head, drawing my simile from the ceaseless hammering in the next room.

“War is therefore inevitable until any and every national exhibition of any one of these passions is met and crushed by superior power.”

“Pugg must be a man of rare insight,” I exclaimed.

“His courage is equal to his insight,” the Director affirmed with somewhat unnecessary emphasis; for Pugg had escaped from Meake, and had again joined issue with Poap in what seemed likely to end in a display of superior power by one or the other of them.

“Pugg has his moments of excitement,” the Director repeated, and went on to develop Pugg’s scheme for securing Perpetual Peace.

“In order that War may be instantly met by superior power, Pugg proposes to rally all the nations on the side of Peace, and to create a great international invincible armament to be held in readiness, night and day, at all naval and military points of vantage all the world over, so that it may instantly swoop down on War and crush it out the moment it raises its head. To put it briefly,

Pugg's formula is, 'War upon War, at any and every moment, anywhere and everywhere.' "

I enthusiastically approved the general outline of Pugg's scheme, and asked for some details as to its working. The Director said that Pugg had gone minutely into all particulars in his lately published volume, "War Finally Vanished." All that was now necessary to insure the success of his plan was to get the different nations to agree to it. At the present moment they were busy upon other matters, but the Director did not doubt that as soon as their hands were free, they would immediately give in their adhesion to Pugg's proposals.

I began to think that Pugg's bold and comprehensive scheme for securing Perpetual Peace might after all prove more effectual than Meake's gentler methods. But before I committed myself, I thought I should like to know something of Poap's attitude. I therefore asked the Director for some enlightenment as to the leading principles on which Poap worked towards the blessed end which we were all determined to secure.

"Poap takes his stand——" the Director resumed, but stopped, for the altercation between Poap and Pugg had again become so violent that Meake could no longer keep them from blows. At last, with the aid of superior force from Poap's pupils, Meake persuasively dragged Pugg to the main door of the Sanctuary.

"Let us sit down quietly and talk it over," said Meake. "I'm sure there's no real difference of opinion between any of us. We all agree as to the end. We only differ as to the means."

With that he got Pugg to the door; whereupon Pugg turned and shouted: "Down with War! Root it out! Exterminate it! Down with it, I say."

"That's what we all say. War must cease. We all think alike about it," Meake softly bleated, as he tried to get Pugg away.

"Down with War!" clamoured Pugg, standing at the door. "Away with it at all costs! Root it out! War upon War!" He shook his fist at Poap, and strode angrily into the Hall, followed by Meake.

Poap stood in the middle of the room, and as Pugg went off, distended his cheeks to their utmost capacity, and metaphorically blew Pugg in viewless particles into the vast inane.

"That little bully," said Poap, advancing ominously upon us, "hasn't the brains of a tadpole."

He again loaded his cheeks, and with a tremendous explosion scattered Pugg into immensity.

"I was just about to explain the cardinal principles of your crusade against War," said the Director, introducing me to Poap, with a pleasant smile.

"My cardinal principles are the first axioms of

common sense," said Poap. "If you will carefully study what I have written here you will see that for the future, War is impossible."

He produced fourteen bulky closely printed tracts and thrust them into my hands. I must own to a constitutional nervous horror of tracts, dating from one summer evening in early life, when my sainted grandmother, now resting from her earthly labours of distributing them, forced me to accompany her, and to present one to each member of a neighbouring colony of violently abusive railway navvies. After some little involuntary hesitation, I accepted Poap's bundle of fourteen tracts.

The title of each one of them was clearly printed on the top, as thus—"War—an anachronism," "War—an intolerable nuisance," "War—its profound immorality," "War—its outrageous absurdity," and so on; each tract dealing with a different aspect of the question. I was very much impressed with these titles, and as I glanced at them, I could not help expressing my surprise that the human race, having been almost constantly at war, both before and since it emerged from apehood, had never suspected in all these hundreds of thousands of years what an intolerable nuisance, and what an outrageous absurdity it was.

"I have made War for ever ridiculous," exclaimed Poap. "For the future, no soldier will

ever enlist under any flag without feeling that he is making an utter ass of himself."

I remarked that the distinguished eighteenth century dramatist, Mr. Puff, had designed a play to show the absurdity of housebreaking. I said it was a thousand pities the play had never been written, and that consequently burglars and thieves went about their business without the least suspicion of the ridiculous nature of their calling.

"I have killed War from fourteen different standpoints," continued Poap with another tremendous spout. "Each one of my tracts, when properly understood, will make War impossible. Especially that one."

He pointed to a fat tract which was uppermost in my hand and which was labelled, "War—an Economic Fallacy."

I thought of my own sadly impoverished private exchequer, and said I had every reason to be grateful to the man who pointed out the pecuniary discomforts of going to war.

"Discomforts!" Poap exploded. "Henceforth any nation that attempts to go to War will merely break down in a speedy and general financial fiasco."

He went on to explain, with much pneumatic eloquence, that our present system of international credit would instantly strangle any future war by the simple automatic action of economic pressure. I was glad to hear this, and said it

was to be regretted that the nations had only just begun to perceive this automatic economic pressure, and that meantime millions and millions of wretched peasants throughout Europe had starved without taking advantage of it.

"Now," I suggested, "if only each one of these luckless millions had taken the precaution, before dying, to write a short treatise on the economic aspects of War, and to point out the practical inconveniences of starving, we should doubtless have come to an earlier realization of this beneficent automatic economic pressure. However, I rejoice to hear that War is henceforth impossible from economic reasons."

I added that so long as War was rendered impossible, I didn't care a jot by which of his fourteen tracts this desirable end was attained.

"Nineteen tracts you mean. I have yet five aspects of the question to treat," said Poap, expelling a series of invisible balloons from his distended cheeks. "I shall then have banished War from the face of the earth by nineteen several overpowering and irrefragable arguments."

I congratulated him on leaving no loophole of excuse to any nation for going to War in the future. He then proposed to sketch the outlines of his five remaining prospective tracts, but the unbearable buzzing in my ears, and the clangour in the next room obliged me to say that I would make some future appointment with him. Mean-

time I would carefully study the fourteen tracts he had already given me. I put them in my pocket, and said they should occupy an honoured place on my library shelves. He then wished me a voluminous "Good morning," and mounting a kind of pulpit on his side of the room, proceeded to address a body of young Poapites on "The Preposterous Futility of Armaments."

The Director admiringly watched him.

"A born orator!" he exclaimed.

I said I had already guessed as much from the immense quantity of wind he blew off. Poap continued at great length, punctuating his sentences with outbursts of triumphant flatulency.

"What an inexhaustible wealth of incontrovertible argument!" the Director ejaculated.

I agreed, but ventured to say that while I had every hope that Poap's incontrovertible arguments would convert the world, I should in the meantime like to see some practical measure taken to prevent the nations from going to War.

"Ah!" said the Director with a seraphic smile, "I was waiting for you to say that. And now I'll show you that we are not content with words in the Sanctuary of Perpetual Peace. We do not rest in Theory. We advance to Action. Come this way."

He led me to the door of the room from whence came the continual din of hammers. I followed him inside and found myself in a kind of black-

smith's forge. A dozen men, stripped to the waist, were energetically beating upon anvils after the manner of a smith who pounds away at a horseshoe. Four other men were furiously working at large bellows, while the furnaces spat and glowed with white heat, and the whole place was enveloped in a mist of smoke and steam. Large heaps of swords of all shapes and sizes were stacked upon the floor. It did not take me long to realize that the smiths were busily employed in beating the swords into ploughshares. I expressed my approbation.

"You have no idea of the arduous nature of our task," the Director said.

I replied that I could readily imagine that it must be an enormously difficult business, since mankind had been intermittently engaged in it since the days of the prophet Micah, and had accomplished so little.

"We are making good headway here," the Director cheerfully claimed, as he handed me a ploughshare to examine. "We opened this forge less than three years ago, and we have already turned out five ploughshares." He pointed to four others which were lying prominently on a mahogany shelf close by. I could not honestly affirm that they were good workmanlike ploughshares, or that they would be of any use on a farm, but I applauded the benevolent intentions which had fashioned them. I said a word or two

of cordial encouragement to the smiths who were sweating in this pacific enterprise, and then, as I remembered my appointment with the Rate Collector, I again begged the Director to be good enough to tell me what o'clock it was.

"I hope you do not grudge the time you have spent in the 'Theatre of Ideas,' " the Director replied, with an accent of reproach.

I hastened to assure him that I had never spent so profitable a morning, and that I had never been so deeply impressed with the vast and prodigious energies of the human mind. Indeed I was very much afraid I had overstepped my engagement.

"Well, we'll see how the time is getting on," the Director amiably acquiesced. And he led the way into the main hall.

I staggered after him, as quickly as the deafening noises in my ear and the whirling movements of the building would permit. He waited for me just outside the Sanctuary, and closed its door after me. I asked him to be kind enough to let me lean against the wall while he ascertained the time.

I had more than once noticed a very large clock over the bandstand; but the dimness of the light had prevented me from seeing how the time was passing. The Director did not look up at the face of the clock, but went straight to an indicator, which was placed in a panel directly be-

neath, and at a convenient level for consultation.

By steadfastly peering at the clock, I saw that both hands were travelling over the dial at a tremendous pace; the hour hand covered the entire circle in about ninety seconds, and the minute hand moved so quickly that it was almost impossible to follow it. The Director returned from consulting the indicator.

"It is now about five a. m., on the seventh of November, Anno Domini 2439," he said.

"What?" I exclaimed.

"It is now half-past ten on the same day," he replied. I was baffled, and asked for an explanation.

"About two years ago," he informed me, "we discovered that in spite of all our efforts, the Theatre of Ideas was pervaded by a sense of boredom and depression. We endeavoured by all means in our power to combat this feeling, for the sake of the reputation of those who were praising it, not only as a centre of profound philosophy, but also as a means of passing a pleasant hour. When we built the Theatre of Ideas it never occurred to us that our audiences might be bored."

"They ought not to have been," I said. "It was most ungrateful."

"It was more than ungrateful," he sternly affirmed. "It was gross criminal ignorance and negligence. Still, they were bored. We shut our

eyes to the fact as long as we could, but it became too apparent to be concealed any longer. The feeling of boredom and depression increased to such an alarming extent that we had to do something, or shut up the place altogether."

"What steps did you take?" I asked, "to prevent such a national calamity?"

"We instituted an exhaustive inquiry into the causes of Human Boredom," he replied.

"That was going to the root of the matter," I said with cordial approbation.

"Yes," he continued, "we examined endless witnesses; including the popular preachers of all denominations, our leading public speakers, the contributors to our comic papers, and all the secretaries of the various anti-associations; we collected all available information and tested every theory and suggestion."

"All these experts must have thrown a flood of light on the matter," I said.

"They did," he assented. "Several times we thought we were on the right track. In fact as soon as the eminent paradoxist, Mr. Twaddledum, had given his evidence in a series of his brilliant double paradoxes, one of our members asked if we need pursue the inquiry any further. And he threatened to resign if we called the celebrated triple-paradoxist, Mr. Twaddledce, who was waiting to come before us. The objecting member was strongly opposed by another mem-

ber, who defended paradoxes on the ground that his aunt Maria and many of the supporters of the Theatre of Ideas still laughed at them, and thought them clever. And he pointed out how much the Theatre of Ideas had owed to the skilful manipulation of paradoxes in the past, and said that he did not think it honourable in us to throw them over—merely because people were finding them out to be tiresome and meaningless. We had a long and heated discussion, and finally it was carried by five votes to four that the perpetration of paradoxes was not the only source of human boredom; but that there must be some deeper underlying universal cause. We sent down a courteous message to Mr. Twaddledee that we should not require his attendance. When quiet was restored, we settled ourselves with renewed earnestness to discover the universal cause of boredom.”

“Was the inquiry a long one?” I asked.

“We started it in March,” he replied, “and sat for three afternoons every week. At the beginning of July, it was apparent that we had made but little progress. So we unanimously decided to give up our annual holiday, and devote the whole of the vacation to our search.”

I said there was evidently no sympathy with slackness in the Theatre of Ideas.

“No, indeed,” he replied. “Whatever we undertake, we do thoroughly.”

I applauded this spirit.

"Because a thing is not worth doing," he continued, "is no reason for not doing it well, and in a reverent spirit."

I agreed with him, and mentioned golf and theological discussion.

"I was President of the Inquiry," the Director went on. "During the whole of the seven months that we sat, I rarely got to bed before two; and at the time of greatest pressure, in the middle of August, I did not change my clothes for ten days."

I looked at him with unfeigned admiration, and asked him if his health had not suffered. He replied that although his bodily energies had been much dissipated, his whole moral character had been braced and elevated.

"And," he added, "I was sustained throughout by the hope that we should be successful; and that by discovering the universal cause of boredom, we might at the same time provide the human race with an infallible means of escape from it."

"And were you successful?" I asked.

"Beyond our wildest hopes," he replied enthusiastically. "We not only discovered the cause of boredom in the Theatre of Ideas, but its absolute and universal cause everywhere and always. Yes," he pursued, "it will never again

be necessary for mankind to hold an inquiry on the subject."

I said I was glad of this, and asked what conclusion they had arrived at. He replied that the absolute and universal cause of boredom was that men had constructed their clocks and watches on a false and viciously reduced scale of chronometry, which made the respective portions of time—weeks, days, hours, minutes, seem to be intolerably long in passing.

"You never feel bored when the hours are flying so fast that you do not perceive their duration," he pointed out.

I readily assented to this.

"As soon as we had made our discovery," he went on, "we set to work to make a practical use of it. In less than three weeks we had invented, designed, manufactured, and patented this two hundred horse-power chronometer which causes an hour to pass so quickly that you scarcely notice it. No boredom now in the Theatre of Ideas!"

I suggested that there were other places of amusement where a clock of that description would afford great relief to the audiences. He said they had the matter under consideration. But for the present their first care must be to shield the Theatre of Ideas from becoming a place of boredom.

"Now," said he, "if we were to sanction the

use of our clock in other theatres, we should lose our relative advantage over them. However, as soon as we feel secure against the imputation of boredom in the public mind, we shall allow some other national institutions gradually to profit by our discovery.”

I asked him what institutions he thought were most in need of an installation. He said that clergymen of all denominations were complaining of the difficulty they had in attracting a congregation, and he thought that the various churches and chapels of the country had the first claim to benefit by their epoch-making discovery.

I once more asked him if he could kindly tell me the present hour, as the Rate Collector was waiting for me to pay my half-yearly contribution to Popular Education. He invited me to guess the time in order that I might realize the importance and significance of their invention. I replied that I had scarcely adjusted myself to the new computation, and I would feel obliged if he would tell me the exact hour. He went up to the indicator, and returning, said that it was two o'clock in the afternoon of the 8th of November.

“Are we still in the same year?” I inquired.

“Oh yes,” he replied, “we are still in Anno Domini 2439. We don't move so quickly as all that.”

The buzzing in my ears was becoming unendur-

able, and the building was now whirling at such a terrific speed that only the inhabitants and frequenters of the place could keep their standing. So accustomed, however, had they become to the revolution that they scarcely noticed it, but continued to move about with the greatest ease and freedom. Noticing my apparent discomfort, the Director asked me if I was not satisfied with the rate of chronic acceleration which they had fixed. I replied that I was perfectly satisfied, and that I had never in my life known time to pass so quickly.

"I'm glad of that," he said. "We consider that we have been most generous in our allowance. If after this any one feels bored in the Theatre of Ideas, we shall not afford him any further alleviation. We shall simply allow him to feel bored. We can make no further concession to an infirmity which we expect all our loyal supporters to conquer or hide."

He said this with great determination.

While I was endeavoring to regain my equilibrium, I asked him upon what basis they had made their calculations as to the necessary and sufficient rate of acceleration which would meet the exigencies of the case.

"The first factor we had to consider," he answered, "was the amount of boredom which had been generated, and what chronometrical augmentation would be necessary to dispel it. The

second factor we had to consider was our capacity for originating Ideas suitable to the era and date registered on our indicator. By combining these two factors, and subjecting them to our own methods of rhabdology, in our newly-tested rhabdological instruments, we arrived at the precise rhabdological result."

I tried to look as if I knew something about rhabdology, but I am not sure that I succeeded.

"And that rhabdological result nothing will induce us to alter, while rhabdology remains one of the exact sciences," he affirmed, with what I thought was unnecessary emphasis, for I had shown no disposition to argue about rhabdology.

However, I thought I should be safe in heartily approving his determination, and I did so; at the same time taking the first chance to divert the conversation from rhabdology, as I felt myself on very insecure ground. I therefore congratulated him upon their evident success in starting and working Ideas that were eminently suited to the date registered on the indicator. He seemed to grow a little despondent.

"We have great difficulty in keeping pace with the times," he said. "Even with all our unrivalled devices for stimulating intellectual activity and originality, I often ask myself, 'Are our Ideas genuinely up to date?'"

I did my best to relieve his anxiety on this score, and said that, on the contrary, so far as

I could judge, all their Ideas seemed, if anything, somewhat too advanced even for the twenty-fifth century. He said this was a fault which would soon remedy itself, as it would not take them long to reach the twenty-sixth.

I had been steadying myself by clutching at the pedestal of the Polyfadtistic Impossiblist. The Director warned me that it was so uncertain upon its foundations that it might fall upon me, as it had fallen upon the unlucky journalists. He would not answer for anything that it might or might not do; I hastily let go my hold, and made for the main door of exit. But the incessant whirl of the building would have tripped me up, if the Director had not come to my aid and kept me on my feet. I asked him if he would kindly assist me across the hall; he courteously offered me his arm, and supported me to the vestibule.

We passed the crowd of spectators. They were still loudly applauding. Pegasus was still rocking; the rider was still stabbing away. I expressed some surprise at his continued efforts.

“Ah!” he said with a deep sigh, “social abuses are so persistent, so hard to kill. If it weren’t for the applause of our kind friends, and the nice notices we get in the newspapers, it would hardly be worth while to attack them.”

We passed through the outer doors, and stood on the top of the handsome flight of broad marble stairs that led up to the Theatre of Ideas. By

this time, I had a little regained my balance, but I felt indisposed to risk an immediate descent into the roadway. For I observed that all the spectators who left the building had much ado to prevent themselves from tumbling as soon as they stepped on to the pavement. They had to descend very warily, balancing themselves carefully on each step; but in spite of these precautions they could not always avoid an accident. Most of them were regular frequenters and subscribers, and were well aware of the perilous nature of the exit. The Director had a nod or a kindly word, or a shake of the hands for each of them. They all manifested or expressed their delight at the performances; each face had a look of intense self-satisfaction. A young lady of about sixteen came up and shook hands warmly with the Director. She overwhelmed him with thanks and congratulations.

"It's a fresh revelation to me every time I come," she declared. "I see everything! I feel everything! I know everything! I comprehend everything! I AM everything!"

The moment she reached the pavement she fell flat on her face with her nose on the curbstone, and her hands spread out into the roadway. A passing dustman picked her up, and carefully wiped away the mud from the large *panache* she wore on her hat.

"I have acquired a new sense to-day," said a

dreamy unkempt young man with an aggressive forehead, and a small receding chin. "Morality and Space are identical and commensurate. There are eleven dimensions in each."

He looked at me as if he expected some corroboration. I said that Kant had speculated upon the same subjects without reaching so large and definite a conclusion.

He said that Kant had never formed a true conception of Space or Morality, and was a sorry blunderer through such problems. He went down the steps with what seemed to me an undue confidence. As his foot touched the ground beneath, he slipped up as if he had trodden upon orange peel, regained his balance, plunged forward, turned round once or twice, and rolled over into the road. A brutal grocer's boy made jeering remarks at his expense.

A very amiable looking old gentleman with gold-rimmed spectacles came out of the building and shook hands with the Director.

"Wonderful!" he said. "Wonderful! I shall write to my bankers to double my subscription."

He went down the steps with some care, but with the alacrity of one practised in the descent.

"That is our oldest and most valued subscriber," the Director informed me. "He never misses a performance."

The old and valued subscriber managed a suc-

cessful negotiation with the pavement; but he had not gone two steps before he became violently unsteady, waved his arms about, and finally sat down in a large puddle in the middle of the road, while his new shiny hat rolled under the wheel of a van, and unbared a large expanse of shiny cranium, perfectly bald.

So far was he from being discomfited at this, or disposed to regard it as a misfortune, that he made no attempt to rise, but looked around cheerfully, and waved his hand gaily at the Director, with the air of one who had triumphantly accomplished an aerobatic feat. The Director waved his hand in return, and smiled and nodded sympathetically.

"That is what we pride ourselves upon most of all," said the Director.

"What?" I asked.

"The practical and ennobling results of our teaching upon character. We inspire our followers with a sublime courage that not merely enables them bravely to face the troubles and misfortunes of everyday life, but actually to rejoice in them. Nobody but a constant subscriber to the Theatre of Ideas could have met disaster in the spirit of my friend there in the puddle."

And he gave the old gentleman another cheery nod, to which the other responded with a beaming smile, and another triumphant wave of the hand.

"It's a splendid moral discipline," I said.

And I felt inwardly rebuked, for I remembered that only the day before I had used bad language as I picked myself up from an ill-judged exit from a motor bus.

The Director asked me if he could give me any further information. I said that I had received as much as I could easily assimilate for the time. I added, however, that I should be glad to know why the man on his head had called me a Trilobite.

“When were you born?” asked the Director.

“In 1851,” I replied.

“Then you are a Trilobite,” he answered.

“Are you quite sure I’m a Trilobite?” I gently inquired.

“You are not merely a Trilobite,” he declared; “you are an ancient and confirmed Trilobite of the most Trilobitish order of Trilobites.”

I stood aghast at this, and asked for an explanation. He replied that the Theatre of Ideas, in the few years of its existence, had accomplished a transformation of the human mind and spirit as complete as that which had been slowly wrought in the strata of the earth during four geological epochs; and that any one who had been bred in the mental and spiritual atmosphere of the previous generation was necessarily nothing but a fossil of a very low type. I suppose my features must have expressed some discontent at being thus classified, for dropping his usually

courteous manner, he asked with some asperity, "If you are a Trilobite, what's the use of denying it?"

I made haste to propitiate him by saying, "Of course I am a Trilobite, it's not the least use my denying it."

I then thanked him heartily for all the trouble he had taken, and he wished me "Good-day."

"Come and see us again!" he added cordially, "come often."

I promised that I would, and wished the institution every possible success.

"A very advanced thinker," I said to myself, as I began a very leisurely, careful descent; being resolved to avoid disaster at the bottom if I possibly could. The outside porter noticed my extreme caution and very obligingly came to my assistance. He was a stout man, with a jovial red face, and a twinkle in his eye.

"What about these Ideas?" I questioned him.

"Well, what about 'em?" he replied, with a broadish grin.

"Well, what about them?" I pursued.

He winked at me and gave me a nudge in the ribs with the arm which he was lending to support me. I pointed out to him that this was no answer to my question, and pressed him again for his views. He adroitly evaded the point by a series of generalizations and a short anecdote.

"Well sir," he said, "some people think they

know all about everything better than everybody else. And other folks think that such folks are mistaken. I won't say which party is right. All the same I may have my opinion about it. I may have my opinion about lots of things. And I may be right. But on the other hand, I may be wrong. One thing is certain; if some people have one opinion about a thing, and other folks have a clean contrary opinion, they can't both be right. But I wouldn't go so far as to say that both of 'em mightn't be wrong. But Lor' bless you sir, when it comes to opinions, it's like choosing a new necktie—there's so many different patterns and colours and shapes, you may waste a whole day and then pick out the wrong one. Now I'm a sensible man, and I've got one opinion on a certain subject; and you're a sensible man, and you've got another opinion. And I bring in another sensible man, and he says that I'm right. And you bring in another sensible man, and he says that you're right. And we keep on bringing in sensible men. What happens then? If we don't take care, we get to arguing about it, same as Joe Tubbs and Bob Poulter did the other day, when we went to have a bite of dinner together. While we was waiting for the sausages and mashed, Bob and Joe got to arguing about the best way to feed bull-pups. Well, I've got my own opinion about feeding bull-pups, but I said nothing. They kept on arguing, and last of all,

when they'd nearly come to blows, Joe turns round to me and he says, 'Solomon Brown, what's the best grub for bull-pups?' he says. ' 'Struth Sol, you've wolfed in all the sausages!'

" 'Have I?' I says. 'Bless me so I have! The best grub for bull-pups? There's nine different ways of feeding bull-pups. It's one of them subjects as sensible men can hold wrong opinions about. Have you ever noticed, Joe,' I says, 'what a lot of subjects there are as sensible men can hold wrong opinions about?'

" 'That ain't the point,' he says. 'The point is what the blazes you mean by wolfing in all the sausages?' "

The porter's discourse served the valuable purpose of giving me time to search for a stable footing. After several dubious experiments, I ventured to trust myself to the caprices of the pavement, and to my great satisfaction I gained the opposite side of the road without any more serious mishap than a few stumbles, and an involuntary collision with a policeman, who roughly pushed me aside, and sent me staggering to a convenient lamp-post. I elung to it while I tried further adjustments of the muscles of my legs and feet to the pavement. The old gentleman was still sitting in the puddle. He gave a cordial salutation or a wave of the hand to each passerby, and continued to bear his misfortune with unshaken fortitude. I have never seen greater

cheerfulness in distress. A passing water cart showered its contents on his bald head and all over his clothes. This, while it increased the depth of the puddle in which he was sitting, seemed also to increase his optimistic and courageous view of the situation.

Upon looking up at the façade of the Theatre of Ideas, I found that the knowledge which I had gained within of its general drift and purpose, enabled me to interpret the mottoes that decorated the exterior. These were not in some foreign language, as I had previously supposed, but were in plain English, only all the letters were turned upside down, and were tumbling in disorder. Thus the motto over the main entrance ran as follows:

S
O²H
D W O I M

With some difficulty I deciphered a few of the more prominent inscriptions that sprawled round the frieze. In a place of honour to the right, emblazoned in large letters of gold on a marble ground, was an upside down text that I made out to run:

WHAT IS DUTY?

EVERYBODY DO EXACTLY AS HE PLEASES

On the opposite side shone two rows of disjointed letters, formed of diamonds, rubies, and emeralds, set upon a plate of onyx. After some puzzling I found the top line read:

WHAT IS HAPPINESS?

I hastened to interpret the lower line. With infinite trouble and much twisting of my head I discovered the answer was:

TEN VOTES FOR EVERYBODY.

The Director of the Theatre of Ideas happened to be passing to his home at the moment when I had succeeded in mastering the text. I hailed him, and expressed my delight that he had found an answer to the maddening conundrum that had baffled the hopes and wasted the energies of the human race through the fruitless centuries. I asked him how they had hit upon this simple solution, which only needed to be stated to command universal assent. He said that like all the other great Ideas that illumined their teaching,

they had got it out of their own heads. They merely shut their eyes, and the Ideas came to them. He added that shutting your eyes was the great secret of getting profound Ideas; because, if one kept one's eyes open, facts were almost sure to intrude and disturb the engendering of the Idea. I thereupon shut my own eyes, and immediately there floated before me a millennium of unspeakable blessedness for everybody, to be secured by the simple process of ten pilgrimages to the ballot box. For the Director explained that in order to give full effect to their Idea, no voter would be allowed to cast more than one vote at a time. This would give him the pleasure of visiting the ballot box ten times on each election day.

"You do not exclude women and children, I hope," was my earnest suggestion to him.

"We exclude no one," he replied.

"And surely you will admit our idiots, and all the rapidly increasing legions of the feeble-minded and the imbecile. It would be a monstrous injustice to shut out these poor creatures from happiness, when it can be so easily showered upon them."

He heartily concurred; indeed, I gathered that he looked upon the enlargement of the voting power of the masses as a timely correction by human wisdom of the cruel blunder of Nature

in creating such a large proportion of imbeciles among our population.

The tighter I shut my eyes, the more convinced I became of the beneficence of the whole scheme. I was suddenly inflamed with a desire to enlarge its scope.

"Couldn't you make it twenty votes for everybody," I urged, "and so double the sum of human happiness at a single stroke?"

He answered me rather ehurlishly, I thought.

"The man, woman, child, or idiot who cannot be happy with ten votes deserves to be miserable." And with this frowning retort he strode away.

Thus do men, by their blindness to the logical development of their own Ideas, for ever shut the gates of happiness upon their kind.

As I clung to the lamp-post, and gradually accommodated myself to the gradually lessening movement of the pavement, my eyes lighted upon another inscription, which I slowly succeeded in rendering as follows:

WHAT IS 'ART?

SOMETHING. ANYTHING. EVERYTHING.

A flood of illumination poured upon me as I gradually seized upon the meaning of this motto. I had carefully read five hundred and nineteen

books upon art, without getting any clearer notion about it than that it was some inscrutable absurdity, which men talked about when they wished to proclaim their superior culture to their neighbours. But, as I dwelt upon this inscription, art for the first time became a reality to me. I stood gazing in ecstasy at the mere letters of the device. I could have knelt and kissed the feet of the authors of this sublime intuition. Its few plain, simple words opened new worlds of ravishing beauty to every member of our democracy.

“God be praised for this formula!” I exclaimed in a kind of religious fervor. “I can now equally enjoy a portrait by Velasquez, the latest diagrammatic chimera of the Post Impressionist, and the coloured chalk designs of the pavement artist. They are all equally inspired, equally beautiful. This enables me to do justice to our Harum-scarum and Pentonville-omnibus dramatists, and shows them to me in their rightful place by the side of Shakespeare and Molière. Now I can walk down Tottenham Court Road or Broadway with a heart full of joy in the fact that every tradesman is an artist by divine right of his calling.”

By this time the buzzing in my ears had subsided, and, upon letting go my hold of the lamp-post, I found that I was able, without much difficulty, to walk across the large green in front of the Theatre of Ideas. Upon turning to look at

the building, I made the curious discovery that it was standing absolutely still, while the earth was gently and equably, but irresistibly moving round it. And by the time I had reached the other end of the green, I had perfectly adjusted myself to the earth's motion, which was indeed none other than its ancient secular revolution upon its own axis. Before I turned down the street to my home, I made a bow of profound respect to the Theatre of Ideas, for it had a most imposing outside.

On passing through a side street, I came to a shop which I had often noticed before, without perceiving that it was kept by an artist, and that all the articles exposed for sale were works of art. But now, illumined by my new Idea as to the reality and universality of art, I saw everything with new eyes. I went in and bought an exquisitely shaped slop-pail, which was ornamented with a flower-like design, and was ticketed "Artistic, six-pence-three-farthings." I am not one of those who deny the meed of praise or cash to an artist, so I insisted upon paying him its full value of sevenpence. I should have liked to retain it as an ornament to my own home; but a new masterpiece of the Pentonville-omnibus school of drama being then announced, I conquered my natural reluctance to part from this work of art, and I sent it to the management of the theatre with my compliments, and a hope

that it might form an ornamental, if not a useful, part of the *mise en scène*. The manager sent me back an extravagant letter of thanks, gratefully accepting the slop-pail, and saying that, welcome as it was as an ornament, it would be yet more welcome as a utility in his new piece. He added that he had never seen a chaster slop-pail, or one that was more likely to have a great moral effect on playgoers. I am proud to say that it is the nightly admiration of the few discerning people who attend that theatre, and that it is entirely in keeping with the personages and *milieu* of the play.

Upon arriving home with my new treasure, I learned that the collector had called for the Education Rate, and, after waiting for some time, had left with threats of prosecution. The next morning I received a summons to attend the court as a defaulter. The case was clearly proved against me, and the magistrate administered a severe reprimand. He said that, in this wonderful age, any man who refused or neglected to contribute to the spread of Ideas among the masses, deserved to be held up to public reprobation as a bad citizen. He fined me Five Pounds.

POSTSCRIPT

For some time after my visit to the Theatre of Ideas, I noticed that a feeling of dizziness and a cloud of mental obscuration came over me, whenever I approached its quarters. I therefore judged it better to avoid that neighbourhood. After a lapse of some weeks, I found myself one morning in a street that led up to that side of the building on which was situated the Sanctuary of Perpetual Peace. I was warned by a slight buzzing in the ears and an uneasy sensation in the pit of the stomach, that I had unconsciously strayed within the sphere of influence of the Theatre of Ideas. Instinctively I began a hurried retreat. But, on reflection, I felt that it was cowardly to run away, as this was indeed nothing but an acknowledgment of the weakness of my own mental and digestive powers. I paused, summoned all my resolution, turned right-about-face, and boldly marched up to the building. I gained confidence as I went along, and determined that for the future I would accommodate my movements to the local disturbances, whenever I visited those parts. By the time I reached the Theatre of Ideas I had acquired my normal self-possession.

As I came in full view of that side of the building, I saw to my great surprise that three com-

94 THE THEATRE OF IDEAS

panies of soldiers had planted each a large cannon on the opposite side of the street. The mouths of the cannons were pointed full at three windows of the lower story. I recognized these three windows as those which looked out from the large room of the Sanctuary of Perpetual Peace. Large stores of ammunition and shells were deposited by the sides of the great guns. I hurried up, and to my horror I heard the commanding officer in charge of the large central cannon giving orders to load it. I demanded from one of his lieutenants what was taking place. He replied that the site of the Theatre of Ideas was a very pleasant and valuable one, and that it was proposed to batter down the present edifice and build in its place three comfortable mansions, for the officers of the guns respectively. There would then be room for a church in the corner facing the green. He said the continued presence of the cannons would ensure the unimpeachable orthodoxy of the church. I began to remonstrate with him, but he thrust me out of the way, and gave directions to his men to load the cannon. The other companies of soldiers were lifting large shells to charge their guns. I glanced all round at the faces of the men and officers, and became convinced that they were in deadly earnest.

An instinct of humanity seized me. I rushed

round to the front of the building, ran up the marble steps, past the jovial, red-faced porter who was asleep on his bench, and entered the main hall. The performances on the floor were much of the same character as those which had taken place on my previous visit. In place, however, of the single rocking-horse and its rider, there were now three rocking-horses, whose riders were all bravely stabbing away at invisible foes, while each of them had gathered a crowd of admiring and applauding onlookers. The drums were beating, and the trumpets were blaring. In the side alley the stalwarts were shouting "Victory," and butting furiously at the brick wall. The only other noticeable change was in the group of statues. Shakespeare had cracked, and was lying in pieces on the floor. The modern statues were tilted at different angles, each in his own particular pose; while in the centre of them was the blatant figure of the Polyfadtistic Impossiblist, placed exactly upside down. His outstretched legs, rather widely apart, reached upwards towards the ceiling, in an attitude of mischievous provocation, one towards heaven, and the other towards the earth. A knot of admirers were gaping up at him.

"His very boots talk!" I heard one of them enthusiastically exclaim, as I hurried by on my errand of warning to the Sanctuary of Perpetual Peace. Panting with haste and alarm, I entered

its door without ceremony. A wild serimmage of loud words and blows was taking place in the middle of the room. Pugg had got Poap down on the floor, and was kneeling on him, pumping all the wind out of him by a bellows-like movement of his knees on Poap's stomach, and knocking Poap's head with the hard corner of the volume "War Finally Vanquished." Meake was vainly trying to get Pugg off Poap's stomach.

"We all think alike," Meake was bleating. "We all agree as to the end. We only differ as to the means."

I pushed my way to them.

"They're going to blow you all to pieces!" I shouted. "Come out of it! Make haste! Look! Look! They're going to fire on you!"

I pointed to the windows. After much shouting and shaking, I managed to get them to listen to me. Pugg, leaving Poap on the floor, went to the middle window and looked out. Meake went to the window on the left, and Poap, getting up from the floor, recovered his wind, and went to the window on the right.

Meake gazed at the soldiers and cannon. "It must be an optical illusion," he said.

I assured him it was nothing of the kind, but that they were real soldiers and real cannon. Meake put on a pair of spectacles to see them more clearly. Pugg lifted up the centre window, and shook his fist at the soldiers, gesticulating

violently and calling out, "Down with War! Root it out!"

"Where's my tract, 'War—An Economic Fallacy'?" Poap called out to his pupils. One of them brought him a copy of the tract.

"I cannot think they mean to load those guns," said Meake complacently.

I told him that by this time the guns were already loaded.

"I'm sure they can't mean to let them off," said Meake. "They all seem to be such dear, nice, gentle, kind-looking men."

They appeared to me to have stern and brutal countenances, and to be villainously determined.

Pugg continued to shake his fist at the soldiers, threatening to root them out, and exterminate them forthwith. Poap opened his window.

"Listen to this," he bawled across the street. "I'll have you to know that War is an Economic Fallacy."

He began to read his tract in a loud, authoritative tone.

"I'll go out and talk to them," said Meake, taking off his spectacles, and making for the door.

I felt that I had sufficiently done my duty by warning them, and that it would be advisable to save myself while there was time. I was hurrying to the door——

“Bang!” came from outside. And then another terrific,

“Bang!”

Part of the front wall of the room tumbled in. I had a momentary vision of Pugg’s headless form in the middle window. It continued to shake its fist and gesticulate. Poap was left unseathed, and went on expounding the Economic Fallacy of War, puffing out great quantities of wind. Meake’s body and clothes were scattered in pieces about the place, and his spectacles dropped close to me. At the first explosion I fell flat upon my face, and I now crawled out into the main hall as quickly as I could. The greatest consternation prevailed in the Theatre of Ideas. Its paraphernalia were wrecked, and crowds of its affrighted frequenters were hurrying hither and thither in aimless confusion. But the Polyfadtistic Impossiblist remained unshaken in his topsy-turvy posture, with outstretched legs in the air, impudently arraigning everything in heaven and on the earth.

Another deafening “Bang!” came from outside, as I got upon my feet, and jostled with the panic-stricken crowd to gain the exit. The dome of the place cracked and opened, and the great clock fell backward into pieces. As I was struggling to get out, I came across the amiable Director. His face wore a look of woeful dejection.

“And just as it was all working so splendidly!” he pathetically ejaculated.

The crush bore me past him, and in a few minutes I found myself safely outside on the marble steps. Another and yet another explosion shook the whole edifice as I descended to the street. Fragments of the mottoes that adorned the frieze came clattering down about our feet. I picked up some of these broken pieces. To my astonishment I found that the scrolls and devices on the outside of the building, instead of being of gold and marble and precious stones, as I had supposed, were the flashiest brummagem imitations. The mottoes composing the texts, "What is Duty?" and "What is Happiness?" were of the cheapest tinsel; and the rubies and emeralds were nothing but clumsily cut lumps of coarse coloured glass. I have kept the fragments that I collected, and I can show them to anyone who questions my word. They could never have been mistaken for gold and precious stones if they had not been placed on the imposing façade of the Theatre of Ideas. I have since had grave doubts about the trappings of Pegasus, and the gold nails on the mane of Bucephalus.

The firing now became more frequent, and I hurried across the green to escape from the falling masses of débris. When at length the cannonading ceases, I question whether much will remain of the Theatre of Ideas.

NOTE.—The acting rights of the three following plays are fully protected in all countries. Legal proceedings will be taken against anyone who attempts to infringe them. Application for terms for professional dramatic performances in America and Canada should be addressed to The American Play Company, Æolian Building, 33 West 42nd St., New York. For amateur performances to Messrs. Samuel French, Playbrokers, West 38th Street, New York.

THE GOAL,
A DRAMATIC FRAGMENT

PERSONS REPRESENTED

SIR STEPHEN FAMARISS, *the great Engineer*

DANIEL FAMARISS, *his son, Engineer*

SIR LYDDEN CRANE, M.D.

ADAMS, *Sir Stephen's Butler*

PEGGIE LOVEL

NURSE CLANDON

SCENE: SIR STEPHEN'S *bedroom in Belgravia.*

TIME: 1897.

THE GOAL

SCENE: *The dressing room of SIR STEPHEN FAMARISS, Belgrave Square. A very richly furnished apartment, with every evidence of wealth and luxury. Up stage right an archway, set diagonally, shows a bedroom beyond with foot of brass bedstead placed sideways to audience. The bedroom is dimly lighted. A large bow-window, rather deeply recessed, runs along the left at back, and looks across a courtyard to another house, whose windows are brilliantly lighted. Figures dancing are seen moving across the windows in accordance with indications given through the play. Between archway and window a large handsome bureau. A door left down stage. Down stage right, fireplace with fire burning. A mirror over fireplace. A large comfortable sofa down stage right. A table left of sofa near centre of stage, with bottle of champagne and glasses on it. Another table up stage left above door. Upon it medicine bottles, spirit lamp, and other paraphernalia of a sick room. A large pier looking-glass up stage above sofa. Other furniture as required, all indicating great wealth and comfort. Time, about ten on an April evening. Discover on sofa, asleep, SIR STEPHEN FAMARISS. A rug is thrown over him, and his head is buried in a pillow, so that nothing is seen of him but a*

figure under the rug. NURSE CLANDON, in nurse's costume, about thirty, is seated in chair at table, reading. The door, left, is very softly opened, and SIR LYDDEN CRANE enters, a little, dry, shrewd, wizened old man about seventy, with manners of a London physician. NURSE rises and puts down her book.

CRANE. Well? How has he been all the afternoon?

NURSE. Just as usual. He won't keep quiet. About an hour ago he fell asleep.

[Pointing to SIR STEPHEN.]

CRANE. Mr. Daniel Famariss has not arrived?

NURSE. No. He sent another telegram for him this evening. And he keeps on asking for the evening papers.

CRANE. Well?

NURSE. I've kept them from him. They all have long accounts of his illness. *[Taking an evening paper from under the table cover, giving it to CRANE.]* Look!

CRANE. *[Taking paper, reading.]* "Sir Stephen Famariss, the great engineer, is dying——" Hum!

[A very gentle knock is heard at door left.]

NURSE goes to it, opens it. ADAMS comes in a step.

ADAMS. I beg pardon. Mrs. Lovel has sent in to ask how Sir Stephen is; and to say that she's very sorry the ballroom is so near his bedroom; and if the noise of the ball will upset Sir Stephen, she'll be very pleased to put it off, and send her guests away?

NURSE. What do you think, Sir Lydden?

CRANE. All excitement is very dangerous for Sir Stephen. The next attack may be fatal. Will you give

my compliments to Mrs. Lovel, and say that since she is so kind I will beg her to postpone the ball? [SIR STEPHEN *stirs, throws off the quilt. He is in a rich dressing-gown. A wiry, handsome, very intellectual-looking man about seventy-five; well-seasoned, vigorous frame; pale, sharp, strong features, showing signs of great recent pain.*

SIR S. Will you give my compliments to Mrs. Lovel, and say that since she is so kind I will beg her to do nothing of the kind. What rubbish, Crane! Because I happen to be dying, to stop the innocent pleasure of a couple of hundred young people! Thank Mrs. Lovel very much, Adams, for sending in, and say that I'm not at all sure that I shall die to-night; but that if I do, her dancing won't in the least interfere with my dying, and I hope she won't allow my dying to interfere with her dancing. I very much wish the ball to take place. [*Very imperiously.*] It's not to be put off! You understand?

ADAMS. Yes, Sir Stephen. [*Going.*

SIR S. And, Adams, give my compliments to Mrs. Lovel, and say that if she doesn't mind, I should like to see Miss Lovel in her ball dress for a moment before the ball. Say that I'm quite presentable, and I won't frighten Miss Lovel. [*Exit ADAMS.*

SIR S. Well, Crane, am I going off this time?

CRANE. This last attack coming so quickly after the other is very alarming and—very dangerous.

SIR S. Yes, but am I going to pull through again, or must I put up the shutters?

CRANE. Well—well——

SIR S. [*Seeing paper on table where CRANE has put*

it.] Is that to-night's paper? [*No reply.*] Give it to me.

CRANE. [*Deprecatingly.*] Famariss—

SIR S. Give it to me.

[CRANE gives it to him reluctantly.]

SIR S. [*Reading from paper.*] "Alarming illness of Sir Stephen Famariss. Angina Pectoris. Fatal symptoms. Sir Stephen Famariss, the great engineer, is dying——" There's nothing like making sure of your facts.

CRANE. Too sure!

SIR S. [*Drily.*] So I think. What do you say? How long am I going to live?

CRANE. Well——

SIR S. Come out with it, old friend. I'm not afraid to hear.

CRANE. With the greatest care, I see no reason why you shouldn't live some weeks—or months.

SIR S. Shall I live long enough to carry out my Milford Haven scheme? Tell me the truth.

CRANE. No. You certainly won't.

SIR S. [*Shows intense disappointment.*] You're sure?

CRANE. I'm sure.

SIR S. But I shall live long enough to start it, to put it into other hands, into my son's hands—if the rebellious fool will only learn wisdom and make it up with me before I die. I shall live long enough for that?

CRANE. No. I fear not.

SIR S. [*Going to bureau.*] But I've got a third of it on paper. [*Taking out plans.*] I've kept it here. I've worked at it when I couldn't sleep. If I can last out

another six months, I can do it. Come, Crane, don't be stingy. Give me another six months! Eh?

CRANE. Famariss, you won't last six months even with the greatest care. You may not last six weeks——

SIR S. Nor six days?

CRANE. Nor six days.

SIR S. Nor six hours?

CRANE. Oh——!

SIR S. Nor six hours. Thank you. I'm prepared.

CRANE. Your son hasn't come yet?

SIR S. No. I've telegraphed him twice—and my terms.

CRANE. Is it worth while—of course, you know best—is it worth while to stick out for terms when——?

SIR S. When one is in face of death. Yes—on a matter of principle. If Dan comes here, he comes on my terms. I'll keep my word; I won't set eyes on him—he shan't pass that door until he owns he was wrong.

CRANE. But——

SIR S. [*Getting excited.*] But he was wrong. He was wrong, and no power on earth shall make me——

CRANE. [*Soothing him.*] Hush! If he does come, you must avoid all excitement in meeting him. Your only chance of prolonging your life is to keep absolutely quiet. You must lay up all day——

SIR S. Lay up all day! Don't talk nonsense!

CRANE. If you don't——

SIR S. If I don't——

CRANE. You may die at any moment.

SIR S. But if I do, I'm dead already. No, Crane, I'll live to my last moment, whenever it comes. When I do take to my bed, I'll take to it once for all, in the churchyard, beside my Peggie! [*Very softly, very tenderly,*

half to himself.] My Peggie! My Peggie! If I do go off, I shall see her again, I suppose—if it isn't all moonshine! Open the window, Nurse! It's getting hot here! [*The NURSE opens window.*] Open that champagne, Crane, and pour yourself out a glass, and pour me out a glass. My Peggie! My Peggie! I wonder if it is all moonshine!

[*The musicians in the ballroom opposite begin to tune up their fiddles. NURSE comes down.*

SIR S. That's right! Tune up! Tune up! And Peggie Lovel promised me the first dance! Tune up!

NURSE. You must keep quiet——

SIR S. [*Pettishly.*] Run away! Run away!

[*CRANE makes NURSE a sign, and she goes off into bedroom. CRANE has opened the champagne and poured out two glasses. He brings one to SIR STEPHEN.*

SIR S. It's the eighty-four Saint Marceaux. I've left you half what's left of this, Crane, and I've left my mule of a boy the other half. He's my heir. I won't see him; no, not if I——

CRANE. Hush! Hush!

SIR S. I won't see him unless he submits. But I've left him every penny, except what goes to charities and churches. It's very puzzling to know what to do with one's money, Crane. I've left a heap to charities, and I've squared all the churches. I hope it won't do much harm. [*A little chuckle.*] There's one thing I regret in dying, Crane: I shan't be able to hear my funeral sermons. But you will——

CRANE. Don't make too sure. I may go off first; but

if I am doomed, I hope the oratory will be of as good a vintage as this.

SIR S. It ought to be, considering what I've left them all. Give them a hint, Crane, not to whitewash my sepulchre with any lying cant. Don't let them make a plaster-of-Paris saint of me! I won't have it! I won't have it! I've been a man, and never less than a man. I've never refused to do the work that came in my way, and, thank God, I've never refused to taste a pleasure. And I've had a rare good time in this rare good world. I wish I'd got to live it all over again!

CRANE. You do?

SIR S. Yes; every moment of it, good and evil, pleasure and pain, love and work, success and failure, youth and age, I'd fill the cup again, and I'd drain it to the dregs if I could. You wouldn't?

CRANE. No. Once is enough for me.

SIR S. You see, Crane, before starting in life, I took the one great step to secure success and happiness.

CRANE. What's that?

SIR S. I made an excellent choice of my father and mother. Not rich. Not aristocratic. But a good, sound, healthy stock on both sides. What's the cause of all the weak, snivelling pessimism we hear? What's the cause of nine-tenths of the misery around us—ruined lives; shattered health; physical, moral, intellectual beggary? What's the cause of doctors' bills?

CRANE. Well, what is?

SIR S. Men and women exercise no care in choosing their fathers and mothers. You doctors know it! You doctors know it! Once choose your father and mother wisely, and you can play all sorts of tricks with your

constitution. You can drink your half bottle of champagne at seventy-five and enjoy it! Another glass!

CRANE. No, I must be going! [*Rising.*] And [*tapping bottle*] you mustn't take any more.

SIR S. Don't talk nonsense! Sit down! Sit down! Another glass! Hobnob, man; hobnob! Life's but a span! Why, this may be the last time, eh?

CRANE. Any time may be the last time. Any moment may be the last moment.

SIR S. Well, then, let's enjoy the last moment! I tell you, Crane, I'm ready. All my affairs are in perfect order. I should have liked to finish that Milford Haven scheme; but if it isn't to be—[*deep sigh*!—Hobnob, man; hobnob!

CRANE. What a lovely wine!

SIR S. Isn't it? I remember Goethe says that the man who drinks wine is damned, but the man who drinks bad wine is doubly damned. Pray God you and I may be only damned once, Crane.

CRANE. Oh, that's past praying for—in my case!

SIR S. Eighty-four! I was boring a hole through the Rockies that summer—ah, Crane, what glorious summers I've had!—seventy-five glorious golden summers—and now—Hobnob, man; hobnob! You've had a good innings, too, Crane.

CRANE. Hum! Pretty fair. I eat well, drink well, sleep well, get my early morning jog in the Park and enjoy it, get my two months on the moors, and enjoy them. I feel as fit to-day as I did thirty years ago. There's only one pleasure that fails me—[*with a grimace at SIR STEPHEN*!—Gone! Gone! Gone!

SIR S. Don't fret about that! We thought it a pleasure, old crony, while it lasted. Now it's gone, let's call

it a plague and a sin, and thank God for giving us a little peace in our old age. Ah, dear, dear, what a havoc women have made of the best half of my life; but—[*brightening*—]I've left some good work behind me, in spite of the hussies! And, thank Heaven, my *throat* has held out to the last. [*Drinking.*

CRANE. [*Drinking.*] And mine!

SIR S. Crane, what was that joke that came up at poor Farley's funeral?

CRANE. Joke?

SIR S. Don't you remember while we were waiting for them to bring dear old Farley downstairs, Maidment began telling that story about the geese and the Scotch-boy—

CRANE. Yes, yes; to be sure!

[*Beginning to laugh.*

SIR S. And just as we were enjoying the joke, we suddenly remembered where we were, and you pulled us up, and spoilt the joke!

CRANE. Yes, yes, I remember.

SIR S. Crane, if Maidment tells that story at my funeral, don't pull him up—

CRANE. Eh?

SIR S. It's a good joke, man! Don't waste it! Have your laugh out, and say from me that, other conditions being favourable, I'm enjoying it as heartily as any of you! You will, eh? You will?

CRANE. Yes, I will! I will!

[*They both laugh a little. ADAMS opens door left, and comes in a step.*

ADAMS. Miss Lovel has come, Sir Stephen.

SIR S. Show her in, Adams.

[*Exit ADAMS.*

CRANE. I must be going.

[*Reënter ADAMS, showing in PEGGIE LOVEL, a débutante of eighteen, in her first ball dress, radiant, excited, beautifully dressed, a vision of girlish loveliness. She is frivolous and self-conscious, and full of little airs and graces, constantly glancing at herself in the two mirrors.*

ADAMS. [*Announcing.*] Miss Lovel. [*Exit ADAMS.*

SIR S. Come in, Peggie. I mustn't call you Peggie any more. Come in, Miss Lovel.

PEGGIE. Mamma said you would like to see me for a minute before the ball!

SIR S. If you don't mind.

PEGGIE. How d'ye do, Sir Lydden? [*Shaking hands.*

CRANE. How d'ye do, Miss Lovel? Good night, Sir Stephen. [*Holding out hand.*

SIR S. Don't go, old chum.

[*Taking his hand, retaining it, keeping CRANE.*

CRANE. I must. [*Taking out watch.*] I have a consultation at eleven.

SIR S. [*Piteously.*] Don't go, old chum.

CRANE. It's really pressing. It's Lord Albert Swale. He won't last till the morning.

SIR S. Don't go. I may be meeting him soon, and I'll make your apologies. [*Very piteously.*] Don't go, old chum!

CRANE. I must. [*NURSE enters from bedroom.*] Nurse, I want a word with you downstairs. [*NURSE crosses to left, and exit.*] [*To SIR S.*] I'll look in, the first thing in the morning.

SIR S. Do. You'll find me—at home.

CRANE. Good night. Good night, Miss Lovel.

PEGGIE. Good night, Sir Lydden.

CRANE. [*In a low tone to PEGGIE.*] You mustn't stay long, and you mustn't let Sir Stephen excite himself. [*To SIR S.*] I'd rather see you in bed——

SIR S. [*Very impatiently.*] Tut! Tut! Tut! I won't be buried before I'm dead. [*Rather curtly.*] Good night. [*CRANE waits.*]

SIR S. [*Imperiously.*] Good night! [*CRANE is going.*] And, Crane, remember—no whitewash on my sepulchre! [*Exit CRANE, left.*]

[*PEGGIE meantime has taken off her cloak. All through she is eager and excited, glances at herself in the glasses very often.*]

PEGGIE. I'm so sorry you're ill, Sir Stephen.

SIR S. I'm not ill, my dear. The old machine seems just as strong and tough as ever, only—it's gone "crack" in a weak place. Well, I've knocked it about all over the world for seventy-five years, and if it hadn't gone crack in one place, I suppose it would in another. Never mind me. Let's talk about you. Go and stand there, and let me look at you.

PEGGIE. [*Displaying her dress.*] Do you like me? Do you like my dress?

SIR S. It's a triumph!

PEGGIE. [*Chattering on.*] You can't imagine what trouble mamma and I have taken over it. Long sleeves are coming in for evening wear. So I had long sleeves at first. I was all sleeves. So I had them taken out and short sleeves put in. The dressmaker made a horrible muddle of them. So we tried long sleeves again. I looked a perfect fright!

SIR S. I won't believe it.

PEGGIE. Yes, I did, I assure you. So at the last moment I had the long sleeves taken out and the short

sleeves dodged up with lace. Which do you like best? Long sleeves or short sleeves?

SIR S. Long sleeves for ugly arms—short sleeves for beautiful arms!

PEGGIE. [*Frowning at him and shaking her head.*]
Ah! What do you think of the bodice?

SIR S. Enchanting!

PEGGIE. It is rather neat, isn't it?

SIR S. Neat? I should call it gorgeous!

PEGGIE. Oh, you must see the one I've got for the Lardner's dance next Monday. Would you like to see it?

SIR S. Very much—on Monday.

PEGGIE. I'll run in for a moment before I go.

SIR S. Do.

PEGGIE. That's a square-cut bodice. This is a round-cut bodice. Which do you like best? Round-cut bodices, or square-cut bodices?

SIR S. To-night I like round-cut bodices. On Monday I think I shall prefer square-cut bodices.

PEGGIE. I think I prefer a square-cut bodice. I had a square-cut bodice to this at first. I looked a perfect monster, so I had it taken out and this round-cut bodice put. I'm not sure that it's quite right now, and I've tried it on fifty times—I'm worrying you to death.

SIR S. No! no!

PEGGIE. Yes, I am, and I can't stay five minutes. Are you sure you wouldn't rather have the ball put off? We will put it off even now, if you wish.

SIR S. Not for the world! not for the world!

PEGGIE. That's so good of you! But I really think you'll be better to-morrow. I'm sure you will. You

aren't really very ill, are you? Do you like this embroidery? [*Pointing to trimming on her skirt.*]

SIR S. It's beautiful! Isn't it Indian work?

PEGGIE. Yes; handmade. It took a man twelve or fifteen years to make this one strip.

SIR S. A quarter of a lifetime to decorate you for a few hours. It was time well spent. Ah, Peggie, that's the sum and meaning of all our toil and money-grubbing!

PEGGIE. What is?

SIR S. To make our women-folk beautiful. It all comes to that in the end. Let Nature and Art knock their heads together till doomsday, they'll never teach one another any finer trick than to show a beautiful maiden to a handsome young fellow, or a handsome young fellow to a beautiful maiden.

[*PEGGIE has got behind him and is admiring herself in the glass.*]

PEGGIE. Really! Really! Yes, I suppose you're right. You're sure I'm not worrying you——

SIR S. No, no. Don't go. I'm quite at leisure now to the end of my life.

PEGGIE. Oh, you mustn't talk like that! So I may tell mamma that you like my dress? What do you think of the skirt?

SIR S. Isn't there too much trimming on it?

PEGGIE. Oh, no! Oh, no!

SIR S. Yes, there's too much trimming.

PEGGIE. Oh, no! Oh, no! The dressmaker said there wasn't enough.

SIR S. Stupid hussies, dressmakers! They're like other folks! They're always the last to know anything about their own business. Tell your dressmaker that

simplicity is the keynote of a great style in dressmaking, and engineering—subtle simplicity. The next time she is going to make you a dress, tell her to take a walk through our National Gallery——

PEGGIE. Oh, Sir Stephen, you surely wouldn't dress me like those old guys in the National Gallery! What would my partners say?

SIR S. Your partners! Ah, you pretty tyrant, you'll turn a great many heads, and set a great many hearts beating to-night!

PEGGIE. Shall I? Shall I?

SIR S. Why, you've set my old worn-out heart fluttering, and, goodness knows, it ought to have done beating for pretty girls at seventy-five—it ought to know better at seventy-five! But it doesn't, and—[*rising with great determination*—I've a great mind——

PEGGIE. [*A little alarmed.*] Sir Stephen, what are you going to do?

SIR S. Don't you remember your promise?

PEGGIE. My promise?

SIR S. Your birthday party six years ago! You danced with me, and you promised that I should be your first partner at your first ball after you came out!

PEGGIE. Of course—I'd forgotten!

SIR S. But I hadn't! Will you keep your promise, Peggie? Will you keep your promise?

PEGGIE. Wouldn't it be dangerous, and—you don't really wish it?

SIR S. [*Sinking down.*] You're right, my dear. I'm foolish with old age. Forgive me!

PEGGIE. I'm sorry to disappoint you. But you'll be able to see us dancing across the garden. You can stand at that window and look on.

SIR S. Look on! That's all I'm fit for now—to look on at life! [*Turning away his head.*]

PEGGIE. Sir Stephen, what's the matter?

SIR S. I've always been in the thick of the fight, Peggie. And I feel to-night as strong as ever I did, and they tell me I must lay up and look on—[*rising with great energy and determination*—I won't! I won't!

PEGGIE. Sir Stephen.

SIR S. I can't bear it, Peggie. I've enjoyed my life, and I don't want to leave it. I want to live, and live, and live—and I will! Ah, what a selfish old coward I am! I'm like a man who has sat down to a good table d'hôte, and eaten and drunk his fill, and now the host tells me my place is wanted for another guest, I cry out and want to have my dinner over again! Don't take any notice of me, dear. Tell me about your partners. Who's going to dance with you to-night?

PEGGIE. Oh, I suppose Mr. Lascelles, Freddie Lister, Lord Doverbury, Johnny Butler, Sir Egerton Wendover, Dick French—amongst others.

SIR S. Peggie——

PEGGIE. Yes——

SIR S. You won't misunderstand me, dear. I'm old enough to be your grandfather. [*Takes her hand very tenderly.*] You won't misunderstand me. [*Very seriously.*] Take care how you choose your partner for life. You'll have a wide choice, and all your future happiness, and the happiness perhaps of many generations to come, will depend on the one moment when you say "Yes" to one of the scores of young fellows who'll ask you to be his wife. Take care, dear! Take care! Look him thoroughly up and down! Be sure that he has a

good full open eye that can look you straight in the face; and be sure that the whites of his eyes are clear. Take care he hasn't got a queer-shaped head, or a low forehead. A good round head, and a good full high forehead, do you hear? Notice the grip of his hand when he shakes hands with you! Take care it's strong and firm, and not cold and dry. No young man should have a cold, dry hand. Don't say "Yes" till you've seen him out of trousers, in riding dress, or court dress. Look at the shape of his legs—a good, well-shaped leg, eh, Peggie? And take care it is his leg! See that he's well-knit and a little lean, not flabby; doesn't squint; doesn't stammer; hasn't got any nervous tricks or twitchings. Don't marry a bald man! They say we shall all be bald in ten generations. Wait ten generations, Peggie, and then don't marry a bald man! Can you remember all this, dear? Watch his walk! See that he has a good springy step, and feet made of elastic—can do his four or five miles an hour without turning a hair. Don't have him if he has a cough in the winter or the spring. Young men ought never to have a cough. And be sure he can laugh well and heartily—not a snigger, or a wheeze, or a cackle, but a good, deep, hearty laugh right down from the bottom of his chest. And if he has a little money, or even a good bit, so much the better! There now! You choose a man like that, Peggie, and I won't promise you that you'll be happy, but if you're not, it won't be your fault, and it won't be his, and it won't be mine!

PEGGIE. Very well, Sir Stephen, I'll try and remember.

SIR S. Do, my dear, do! It's a good legacy, my dear.

I've left you another. You won't be disappointed when my will's read——

PEGGIE. Oh, Sir Stephen!

SIR S. No, you won't; but remember my advice to-night. That's the best wedding present for any girl.

PEGGIE. Very well, Sir Stephen! I must be going. Good-bye. *[Giving her hand.]*

SIR S. Yes, I suppose you mustn't stay. *[Taking her hand, keeping it as he had kept CRANE'S, as if he couldn't bear to let her go.]* Good-bye.

[Looking longingly at her with a mute entreaty to stay. PEGGIE draws her hand away, puts on cloak, and goes to door, left. He watches her all the while.]

PEGGIE. *[At door, runs back to him.]* Sir Stephen, I'll keep my promise. You shall be my first partner. *[Offering her card.]* Write your name down for my first dance.

SIR S. But I shan't be there.

PEGGIE. I'll sit out, and keep it for you.

SIR S. No, no——

PEGGIE. Yes, yes! I insist. Put your name down!

[He writes on her card. Enter NURSE, left.]

PEGGIE. Good-bye, Sir Stephen.

SIR S. Good-bye, Peggie! *[Softly.]* Peggie! Her name was Peggie! My wife's name was Peggie!

[She bends and kisses his forehead; then goes to door, turns and looks at him.]

PEGGIE. Au 'voir.

[Blows him a kiss and exit, left. SIR STEPHEN looks longingly after her, walks a little up and down the room.]

NURSE. [*Anxiously.*] Sir Stephen, don't you think you might lie down now?

SIR S. Run away! Run away!

NURSE. Won't you rest a little on the sofa?

SIR S. Run away! Run away!

NURSE. Can I get you anything?

SIR S. Run away! Run away! [*Pacing up and down.*] Mr. Daniel Famariss hasn't come yet?

NURSE. No. You know they said that he was away surveying in an out-of-the-way country, where no message could reach him.

SIR S. If he should come too late, tell him—tell him—I've gone surveying in an out-of-the-way country—where no message can reach me! [*Changing tone.*] Dear me, Nurse, I'm afraid this dying is going to be a very tiresome business for both of us!

NURSE. Oh, Sir Stephen, I'm sure I don't mind!

SIR S. You don't mind? That's very good of you. You're in no hurry? Well, neither am I.

NURSE. Sir Stephen, don't you think——

SIR S. What?

NURSE. Last night you said you'd send for a clergyman.

SIR S. Did I? That was at two o'clock in the morning. How horribly demoralized a man gets at two o'clock in the morning!

NURSE. But, Sir Stephen——

SIR S. Well?

NURSE. Don't you think you ought to begin to think of better things?

SIR S. Well. I'm seventy-five. Perhaps it is nearly time. What better things?

NURSE. Death and—judgment.

SIR S. Don't talk nonsense. I don't call death and judgment better things.

NURSE. But, Sir Stephen—you will be judged.

SIR S. Judged? Yes. But I shan't be judged by the prayers I've said, and the psalms I've sung. I shan't be judged by the lies I've told, and the deceits I've practised, and the passions I've given way to. I shan't be judged by the evil and rottenness in me. No; I shall be judged by the railways I've made, and the canals I've scooped, and the bridges I've built—and let me tell you, my dear creature, my accounts are in good order, and ready for inspection at any moment, and I believe there's a good balance on my side. [*Guests have been assembling in the ballroom. Dance music bursts out. Dancing begins.*] Ah! What tune is that?

[*Goes up to window, begins dancing a few steps, swaying with the music.*]

NURSE. [*Frightened.*] Sir Stephen! Sir Stephen!

SIR S. Run away! Run away!

NURSE. Sir Stephen, you wouldn't be found dancing at the end?

SIR S. Why not? I've done my work! Why shouldn't I play for a little while? [*A bell is heard.*] Hark! The front door bell——

NURSE. Yes. [*Goes to door, left.*]

SIR S. Go downstairs and see if that's my son. If it is, tell him——

[*Gentle knock at door, left. ADAMS enters a step. The dancing and music are continued in the ballroom.*]

ADAMS. I beg pardon, Sir Stephen. Mr. Daniel Famariss has arrived——

SIR S. Ah!

[*Getting excited.*]

ADAMS. And would like to see you.

SIR S. Tell him he knows the conditions.

NURSE. But, Sir Stephen——

SIR S. Run away, my good soul! Run away. [To ADAMS.] He knows the conditions. If he accepts them, I shall be pleased to see him.

DAN. [*Voice outside door.*] Father!

SIR S. Shut that door!

[ADAMS *nearly closes door, which is kept open a few inches from the other side.*]

DAN. [*Outside.*] Father! You won't shut the door in my face?

SIR S. Keep on that side of it, then. Adams, you can go. Leave the door ajar.

[*Exit ADAMS, left. SIR STEPHEN, with an imperious gesture, points NURSE to archway right. Exit NURSE, into bedroom, with an appealing gesture to SIR STEPHEN.*]

SIR S. [*Goes to door, left; it is still open a few inches.*] Are you there, Dan?

DAN. [*Outside.*] Yes, father.

SIR S. I vowed I'd never set eyes on you again, till you owned you were wrong about those girders. You were wrong? [*No reply.*] You were wrong? [*No reply.*] Do you hear? Confound you, you know you were wrong! [*No reply.*] Do you hear, Dan? Why won't you say you were wrong? You won't! [*Slams door, goes right, has an outburst of anger, recovers, listens, goes back to door, opens it a little.*] Are you there, Dan?

DAN. [*Outside.*] Yes, father.

SIR S. You were wrong, Dan. [*No reply.*] I haven't got long to live, Dan. It's angina pectoris, and the next attack will kill me. It may come at any moment. [*Very piteously.*] Dan, you were wrong? Why won't you say so? Even if you tell a lie about it?

DAN. [*Outside.*] I was wrong.

SIR S. Ah! [*Flings open the door, DAN runs in. SIR STEPHEN meets him, embraces him affectionately, with a half sob.*] Why didn't you say it before? You knew how much I loved you. Why did you keep apart from me all these years?

DAN. I'm sorry, sir. But perhaps it was for the best. I've done very well.

SIR S. Of course you have. You're my son. But how much better you'd have done if you had stuck to me! How much better we both should have done! I'm sorry, too, Dan. I was wrong, too—not about the girders. You *were* wrong about them, Dan. But I was wrong to be angry and to swear I wouldn't see you. Ah, what could I have done with you at my side! I could have carried out my Milford Haven scheme. Perhaps it isn't too late! [*Going to bureau, getting more and more excited.*] I've got all the plans here—
[*Taking out a heap of plans.*]

DAN. Not now, father; not now!

SIR S. Yes, now, my boy! To-morrow may be too late! [*Going to table.*] Come here, my lad! Oh, Dan, what years we've wasted! Come here! I want you to carry this out. You'll have immense opposition. Beat it down! You'll have to buy Shadwell and his lot. They're a dirty gang. But you'll have to do it. I hate bribery, Dan; but when you've got to do it, do it thoroughly! Then there's Mincham. Buy him over, if you

can, at a small figure—say a thousand pounds—he's a mean little cur; but offer him that, and if he won't take it, snap your fingers at him, and swamp him! Remember the trick, the scoundrel's trick, he served me over the granite for the viaduct. Remember it, Dan, and don't spare him! Swamp him! Swamp him! * [*With great energy of hate.*]

DAN. Father—

SIR S. Bring your chair up. I must go on now—while it's all before me! I want you to carry this Milford Haven scheme out! I want it to be said that what old Stephen Famariss couldn't do, young Dan Famariss could! The father was a great man, the son shall be a greater, eh? Look here, you must start on this side. I've had all the soundings made—

DAN. To-morrow, father; to-morrow!

SIR S. No, now! There's no such thing as to-morrow! We'll go through it now—in case— There's a great world-tussle coming, Dan—I shan't live to see it—but it's coming, and the engineer that ties England and America will do a good turn to both countries. England to America in four days! I want that crown to rest on your head! Look! You must begin here! Look! Just there! You must throw a bridge over—

[*Stops suddenly, puts his hand to his heart; his face indicates intense agony. NURSE enters from bedroom.*]

DAN. Father—

SIR S. [*Persisting, with a wild aimless gesture.*] Throw a bridge from here—to the other side, and then—

DAN. Father, what is it?

* 1 Kings, chap. ii., verses 8, 9.

SIR S. The end, Dan. [*His face shows that he is suffering great pain. A great burst of dance music. They offer to support him. He waves them off.*] No, thank you. I'll die standing. England to America in four days. [*Long pause. He stands bolt upright with great determination.*] You were wrong about those girders, Dan—My Peggie—I wonder if it's all moonshine—Peggie—My Peggie——

[*Dies, tumbles over table. Music and dancing in ballroom louder than ever.*]

CURTAIN.

HER TONGUE,
A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

PERSONS REPRESENTED

MISS PATTY HANSLOPE, *about thirty*

MINNIE BRACY, *her cousin*

WALTER SCOBELL, *a rich Argentine planter*

FRED BRACY, *Minnie's husband*

WAITER

SCENE. *Varley's Private Hotel, Southampton.*

TIME. *The Present—a morning in Autumn.*

HER TONGUE

SCENE: *Varley's Hotel, Southampton. A private sitting room furnished in an old-fashioned, rather dingy, comfortable way. A door at back to the right, leading into a passage. A fireplace, right, with fire burning. A large looking-glass over the fireplace. A large bay window all along left, giving a view of a garden, and beyond its wall shipping, masts, big steamer funnels, etc. Left centre, toward the window, a large narrow table with a cloth.*

[Discover WAITER, showing in FRED and MINNIE BRACY.

WAITER. How long should you require the sitting-room, sir?

FRED. [*An ordinary Englishman, about thirty-five.*] Only for an hour or so. My friend is leaving by the Dunstaffnage—what time does she sail?

WAITER. At two o'clock. Will this room suit you, sir?

FRED. Yes; this will do. When my friend comes back, ask him to come here.

WAITER. Yes, sir. [*Exit.*

FRED. [*Laughing.*] Well, this is a pretty mad bit of business.

MINNIE. [*A well-dressed Englishwoman, about*

thirty.] Not at all! I saw Mr. Scobell was rather struck by Patty at the ball last week. It was lucky she was staying at Southsea and could get over so easily.

FRED. What's the good of bringing her over for an hour? They can't fix up an engagement in that time.

MINNIE. Why not? Mr. Scobell seems to know his own mind.

FRED. Oh, yes!

MINNIE. And he wants to get married.

FRED. Yes; but you're going ahead too fast, old girl.

MINNIE. There isn't much time to waste, is there? He has only another hour in England, and he isn't engaged yet. What did he really say in the smoking-room last night?

FRED. Nothing much. Except that he wanted a wife out there, and he wished he'd had an opportunity of seeing more of Patty. And on the strength of that, you telegraph straight off to Patty to come here and meet him.

MINNIE. Naturally! Mr. Scobell will be a very rich man, and I wanted to give poor old Pat a chance.

FRED. She has muddled her love affairs terribly. You might just give Pat a friendly caution.

MINNIE. Her tongue? [FRED *nods.*] Yes, she does talk.

FRED. And never says anything! But look at her mother!

MINNIE. Oh, aunt's a downright horrid old bore!

FRED. And Patty's just as bad! Poor old Lorry!

MINNIE. Why poor old Lorry?

FRED. Faney being out alone in the wilds of Argentina, and having nothing to listen to but Patty's tongue, for four or five years. [*Bursts into a roar*]

MINNIE. Hush!

[*Enter at back, LAWRENCE SCOBELL, about thirty-five, rather heavy, thick-set, stolid, quiet, cautious.*]

FRED. So you've turned up, Lorry?

SCOBELL. Yes, there's a mistake about my cabin; wrong number; they've turned another fellow in.

MINNIE. Perhaps you'll have to stay till the next boat.

SCOBELL. [*Shakes his head.*] Can't!

MINNIE. Not even to meet my charming cousin, Patty, and get to know her better?

SCOBELL. [*Shakes his head.*] I must be in Buenos Ayres this day three weeks. Miss Hanslope is coming here?

MINNIE. [*Taking out an opened telegram.*] Yes, I've just got her telegram. She says—[*reading*]: "Delighted to come over, will be at Varley's about twelve." She'll be here directly.

SCOBELL. In your telegram to her you didn't mention it was on my account?

MINNIE. No—at least I said you were sailing by the Dunstaffnage, and wished to say good-bye to her.

SCOBELL. You haven't committed me?

MINNIE. Oh no! But you are—a—interested in Patty?

SCOBELL. Yes, indeed!

MINNIE. And you hope to be—still further interested?

SCOBELL. Yes. I dread the terrible loneliness out there. Not a soul to speak to for weeks together!

MINNIE. Patty is splendid company—isn't she, Fred?

FRED. Delightful! You'll never have a dull moment, old boy.

MINNIE. She has refused three offers in the last six months.

FRED. And I know Bill Garriss is screwing up his pluck to ask her.

MINNIE. [*Shakes her head.*] I'm afraid you don't stand much chance. Still you can but try.

SCOBELL. Thank you. If you will merely give me half an hour alone with Miss Hanslope—

[*Enter WAITER.*

WAITER. Mr. Scobell?

SCOBELL. Yes.

WAITER. A clerk from the shipping office wishes to see you about your cabin, sir.

SCOBELL. I'll come to him. [*Exit WAITER.*] If Miss Hanslope comes, I shall be back in a few minutes.

[*Exit.*

FRED. Well, Patty can't say we haven't done our best for her!

MINNIE. If only she won't talk too much!

FRED. Yes, Pat's a good-looking girl; if she'd only hold her tongue, nobody would ever guess what a fool she is!

MINNIE. It was her terrible chatter that choked off George Moorcroft—he told me so himself.

FRED. Perhaps Lorry won't find her out—he'll only have half an hour. Let's hope he'll spend all the time in looking at her.

[*PATTY'S voice heard in the passage; a moment or two later the WAITER opens the door for her and stands back; she is heard com-*

ing along the passage speaking very rapidly.

PATTY. [Off.] Yes, Mr. and Mrs. Bracy. He's a little fair man with reddish hair and a sandy bristling mustache that he's always curling up at the end, like the German Emperor, and she's a tall dark woman with a Chinchilla muff, and a pointed nose something like my own.

[Sailing into room, talking all the while. She is a handsome woman about 30, with a perpetual smile, and a perpetual stream of empty irrelevant talk, which flows on in a cackling but not unpleasant voice, and is constantly punctuated by an irritating, meaningless little laugh of three notes; the last note is the highest, so the laugh is never completed, but turns up unexpectedly in another part of the sentence. She has an air of joyous self-complacency, and never suspects herself of being an empty silly fool. She over-emphasizes nearly every word in a sentence, especially unimportant adjectives and adverbs.]

[To WAITER.] Now, why couldn't you show me in at first instead of making such a fuss about it?

[WAITER is going—she continues speaking.]

Oh! I've left a waterproof—please look after it.

[WAITER goes off and closes door after him.]

[PATTY goes up, opens it and calls off.]

Oh, and an umbrella. *[Closes door.]* Well, here you are, my dear! *[Kissing MINNIE.]* I've been racing all over the hotel to find you! I do think Southampton is the most stupid place, and the waiters are absolutely

the most stupid people under the sun! Well, dear, where is Mr. Scobell? Do you really think now that he is—[*silly little laugh*] smitten? I couldn't quite understand your telegram, so I flew upstairs without any breakfast and dressed as quickly as I could. I hope I haven't overdone it—[*glancing at herself in the glass*]—because I don't wish Mr. Scobell to think me a dressy, extravagant woman. At the same time I want to look my—[*silly little laugh*] sweetest and best. Oh, Fred, how are you? How can Minnie let you wear such awful waistcoats? When I get a husband—[*silly little laugh*] I shall take care to—— Where have I put that telegram? [*Searching her pockets and a handbag.*] But you know I thought that night at the ball he was—[*silly little laugh*] because he kept on looking at me in a—[*silly little laugh*]. Well, you know how men look when they really are—[*silly little laugh*]. Oh, here it is! [*Producing the telegram, reading.*] “You have made a great impression [*silly little laugh*] on Mr. Scobell. He is most anxious to see you again [*silly little laugh*]. Meet us at Varley's Hotel, Southampton, early as possible. Your whole future at stake—most important you have an understanding with him before he sails.” Do you know I think it was *the* dearest and sweetest thing in the world for you to spend all that money on a telegram—[*kisses her*]—and when it's all settled [*silly little laugh*] I shall give you my diamond and pearl brooch as a little acknowledgment—darling. You know, the one with the large pearl for the body of the bee—it's my favourite brooch. And I shall work Fred a very handsome waistcoat myself instead of that awful thing he's wearing. And do you really think,

eh? [*silly little laugh*] Mr. Seobell is really, really, really smitten?

MINNIE. We've all but fixed it up for you! You've only got to let him propose and accept him!

PATTY. Thank you, dear. Of course I shall accept him if he gives me the chance.

MINNIE. He's tremendously rich—in a few years he'll be a millionaire.

FRED. A multi-millionaire! You've only got to go out to Argentina for four or five years, Pat, and then come back to London and help him to spend it.

MINNIE. It will be your own fault if you don't bring it off this time!

PATTY. My dear! How can it be my fault when I've simply flown over here without any breakfast to see him? I wonder if I could have just a biscuit, and a glass of sherry?

FRED. Certainly.

PATTY. No—it might make my nose red. My nose isn't red now, is it? [*Glancing at herself in glass.*] It always gets a little red when I go without breakfast. [*Looking at herself in the glass.*] I almost wish I'd put on my other hat—you know, the large one—[*Her present hat is enormous*—but I thought it might get dusty—however if he is really—[*silly little laugh*]. I daresay it will do well enough [*silly little laugh*], and after all, it isn't what one wears as much as what one is in oneself that really matters—I think I'll take my hat off if you don't think it looks just a little too—too—[*Takes hat off.*] Yes, I really think that looks better—don't you? [*Looking at herself in the glass.*] Do you know I think I shall hang back at first, and give him just a tiny, tiny little wee bit of a snubbing—

MINNIE. My dear Pat, there's no time for that.

FRED. Take my advice, Pat—come to business at once. The moment Lorry makes you an offer, or even a little before, down on him, and don't give him a chance of escape.

PATTY. Very well. I will. But I hope he won't think I'm throwing myself at him, because it isn't as if I hadn't got other chances. There's George Moorcroft only waiting for me to give him another chance—and I rather fancy Mr. Garriss is hoping I—*[looking at herself in glass]*—I'm sure my nose is a little red.

FRED. Not a bit! Your nose is all right. It isn't your nose that will do the mischief.

PATTY. What then? What *do* you mean?

MINNIE. Now, Pat, don't get angry! George Moorcroft told me that the reason he hung back was—Well, my dear, it was your tongue.

PATTY. My tongue?! My tongue?! My tongue?! The reason George Moorcroft holds back is because I've very plainly given him to understand that it's absolutely not the least possible use in the world his coming forward! George Moorcroft! Why, he has the vilest temper. George Moorcroft! *[With a little snort.]*

FRED. Well, never mind George Moorcroft. Lorry Scobell will be here in a moment.

MINNIE. Yes! Now, Patty, for your own sake—take care!

PATTY. Take care of what?

MINNIE. Mr. Scobell is a very cold, quiet, reserved man.

PATTY. Then he'll naturally want somebody who is very gay and lively.

MINNIE. [*Looking dubiously at FRED.*] I don't think Mr. Scobell will like——

PATTY. My dear Minnie, that shows how little you know about human nature. People are always attracted by their opposites. I'm very glad you've told me Mr. Scobell is cold and reserved, because now I know exactly how to manage him. I was going to be a little reserved and standoffish myself, but now, well, I shall be a little, just a little [*silly little laugh*] free and easy, so as to fit completely into his moods. Why are you two looking at each other like that? Do let me know how to manage my own love affairs. Really any one would think I'd never had [*silly little laugh*] a proposal before!

FRED. [*Solemnly.*] I hope, Patty, you'll never stand in need of one again!

[SCOBELL *enters at back with a steamship ticket in his hand.*

FRED. [*To Lorry.*] Miss Hanslope has just arrived.

PATTY. [*Shaking hands eagerly with Scobell.*] How d'ye do? It was so kind of you to wish to see me again. I had a croquet party at the Barringers'—they're really very nice people, and one meets such a lot of nice people there, but the moment I got Minnie's telegram I flew off, and——

FRED. [*Has been making signs to PATTY to be quiet—he now bursts in upon her stream of talk.*] One moment, Patty—Minnie and I have a little shopping to do, and if you'll excuse us—Lorry, old fellow, I'll order lunch for four, and I'll have it all ready to pop on the table the moment we come in. Come along, Minnie! We must make haste!

[*Exit.*]

[MINNIE kisses PATTY, gives her a warning look and sign, and exit.

[SCOBELL has gone up to fireplace.]

PATTY. [*Glances at him a moment.*] So you're really sailing for Argentina to-day?

SCOBELL. Yes.

PATTY. I've always wished to travel. Of course, we've done Switzerland and the Riviera till we're utterly sick of it. I loathe Switzerland! But I've always had a great desire to explore fresh countries, and camp out, and rough it a great deal, and perhaps do a little pig-sticking—that is if you wouldn't think it a little—just a tiny little bit [*silly little laugh*] unwomanly. I've such a horror of doing anything unwomanly. When I die I should like my epitaph to be "She never did anything unwomanly." Just that! No more! "She never did anything unwomanly." And perhaps you think pigsticking unwomanly?

SCOBELL. There is no pigsticking in Argentina.

PATTY. Isn't there? Then, of course, that settles the question. Where is Argentina?

SCOBELL. In South America.

PATTY. South America! How awfully interesting! I've always dreamed of South America since I was a schoolgirl, and read about Red Indians, and the Incas, and Pagodas, and the Conquest of Peru. I can't remember who it was that conquered Peru. [*A pause.*] Peru was conquered, wasn't it? [*Pause.*] Peru is in South America, isn't it?

SCOBELL. Yes. [*She looks at him—a longish pause.*

PATTY. And so you really sail for Argentina this afternoon?

SCOBELL. Yes.

PATTY. I felt *so* flattered when I got Minnie's telegram to say that you remembered me. And we only met that one night at the ball! But how often one finds that even chance meetings like ours are charged with lifelong consequences, doesn't one?

SCOBELL. Yes.

PATTY. One sees a face in a crowd, or perhaps in a railway carriage, or one hears a distant note of music; or perhaps in the bustle and whirl of a London season a sense of the utter emptiness of things comes over one, and one longs to throw off all the trammels of civilisation, and live just a sweet simple existence in some new country—haven't you ever felt like that?

SCOBELL. Not exactly.

[PATTY feels discouraged, and there is a long pause.]

PATTY. So you really must sail for Argentina this afternoon?

SCOBELL. Yes.

[Another long pause. PATTY looks at him and then goes towards table.]

PATTY. [In a colder, less eager voice.] I really couldn't understand Minnie's telegram. She said something about your sailing, and you'd like an opportunity of seeing me. You did wish to see me?

SCOBELL. Yes. [Coming up to her.] The fact is, I was very lonely out there, and last night in Fred's smoking-room I felt very down in the mouth at the thought of leaving England—and I thought—[approaching her rather tenderly].

PATTY. Yes? [Approaching him a little.]

SCOBELL. I felt—[approaching her].

PATTY. Yes?

SCOBELL. I thought if I could persuade some nice girl——

PATTY. Yes?

SCOBELL. I dreaded being out there alone——

PATTY. How terrible for you! How absolutely awful! I think there's nothing more dreadful than that feeling of utter solitude and desolation that creeps over one when one is left alone for any long time. What do you do in Argentina?

SCOBELL. I'm developing a large tract of land, cutting it up into farms. I farm one large tract myself.

PATTY. What a perfectly sweet life! Three years ago we went for a month to a farmhouse in Wales, and I used to watch the girl milking the cows every evening. I asked her to let me try one evening, but she didn't understand a word of English, and the cow got rather troublesome, and when I patted her dear little calf she looked quite vicious, as if she was going to toss me. Not that I'm afraid of cows!—Or of anything! In fact I love danger of all kinds! I positively revel in danger! That's my one fault—if it is a fault. And there couldn't be a prettier dress to face dangers and hardships in than a Welsh girl's. I wonder if it would be possible to get a Welsh dress in Southampton? No, there isn't time, is there?

SCOBELL. I'm afraid not. [*He goes to corner of table up stage.*]

[*During the following scene he gradually gets into window—she gradually follows him up, gets on the right side of table, which is on casters; she unconsciously pushes it toward the window until she has hemmed him in the lower bay of the window, with*

the table diagonally across from middle of window to the corner of the bay, so that he cannot escape. This is done very gradually and quite unconsciously.

PATTY. [*After a pause.*] What do the women generally wear in Argentina?

SCOBELL. I haven't noticed.

PATTY. But they must wear something! I do think it's so charming when the women of a country adopt some distinctive national costume, like the Tyrolese or the Welsh. I believe that some of the Tyrolese women wear a dress that is—a—well, it's really a masculine dress. I couldn't do that! I loathe masculine women, don't you?

SCOBELL. Yes.

PATTY. I think that when once a woman goes out of her own proper sphere and tries to be a man—well, she doesn't succeed, does she?

SCOBELL. No.

PATTY. When a woman has so many attractions of her own, why should she go out of her own proper sphere and try to be a man? Why should she?

SCOBELL. I don't know.

PATTY. I think I shall introduce a national style of dress into Argentina. What are the shops like in Argentina?

SCOBELL. There aren't any shops where I live.

PATTY. No shops?

SCOBELL. It takes three weeks to get to the nearest town.

PATTY. Oh, how delightful! No shops! It must be quite in the country.

SCOBELL. [*Looking at the steamship ticket in his*

hand.] They've made a mistake in the number of my cabin.

PATTY. Have they? How careless of them! I often ask myself how can people be so stupid? How do you account for there being so many stupid people in the world? [*He has been fidgetting—a pause.*] What's the climate of Argentina? Is it very hot?

SCOBELL. Rather—in the summer.

PATTY. And I suppose the winters are rather cold? I am so fond of the winter! I think there's nothing more delightful than to gather round the fire on a winter evening, while the logs are crackling on the hearth, and tell ghost stories. I know one or two awfully good ghost stories. Do you know at times I feel I must frighten people! I do! I can't help it! I feel positively wicked! I made a whole party sit up at the Vicar's the other night. The Bishop said I made him feel quite uncomfortable. The dear Bishop! It was too bad of me to frighten him, wasn't it?

SCOBELL. Yes.

PATTY. Are you fond of ghost stories?

SCOBELL. Not very.

PATTY. Then I shall tell you one. Not now—but one of these days I shall suddenly begin a creepy, creepy blood-curdler that I reserve for my special friends; and before you expect it, I shall make you positively shudder all over! Positively shudder! Now, don't say I didn't warn you.

SCOBELL. I've got to change my ticket.

PATTY. But I don't know after all if I don't prefer the summer. The delightful long evenings! But really I can make myself happy and contented anywhere. Nothing ever puts me out. If things go wrong, I

simply smile, and say all the pleasant things I can think of, and wait till everything comes all right again! [*A longish pause.*] We didn't settle what dresses I ought to get. And then, of course, there are mother's dresses to think of as well as my own.

SCOBELL. You have a mother?

PATTY. Yes, didn't I tell you? I must have forgotten it. How I wish you could have met her! But, of course, there will be plenty of opportunities, won't there? [*Pause—he doesn't reply.*] You will like her so much. [*Pause.*] Everybody says I'm exactly what she was when she was twenty-five. [*SCOBELL is fidgeting and looking out of window. By this time she has pushed the table against the window so that he is quite hemmed in at the lower bay of the window.*] I must tell you mother is rather a gay old creature.

SCOBELL. Indeed!

PATTY. Yes. I rather pride myself on my good temper and my constant flow of animal spirits. [*Silly little laugh.*] Don't you think I have rather a good supply of animal spirits?

SCOBELL. Yes.

PATTY. I'm nowhere beside mother! She's simply wonderful! Always the life and soul of any company she's in. [*Pause.*] You've been rather dull and lonely out in Argentina, Fred tells me?

SCOBELL. Not very.

PATTY. Nobody could be dull and lonely for one moment where mother is. What amusements are there in Argentina?

SCOBELL. There aren't any amusements.

PATTY. No amusements?

SCOBELL. Not where I live.

PATTY. Mother is so fond of society, and seeing everything, and going everywhere, and knowing everybody.

SCOBELL. Argentina won't suit her at all.

PATTY. Oh, but of course, if I went to Argentina it would be impossible for me to leave my mother behind! I simply couldn't do it! She is such a dear! Always ready to make herself pleasant and agreeable wherever she is. And she has such a fund of anecdotes and recollections! And so witty and humorous! I love wit and humour in a woman, don't you?

SCOBELL. Yes.

PATTY. I'd far—oh far, rather a woman were witty and humorous than merely beautiful, wouldn't you? Because beauty itself so soon fades, and when a woman has beauty and nothing else, well, it's like putting all the goods in the shop window, isn't it? And the moment she loses her good looks—poor creature! what is she? Just a mere bit of faded finery to be thrown aside. I don't wonder that men quickly tire of some women, do you?

SCOBELL. No.

PATTY. Nobody could tire of mother! And she's so ready at repartee—we had my Sunday school children to tea on our lawn, and we invited the new curate, and after tea he took the garden broom and was sweeping up the litter the children had made. "Ah!" my mother said, "new brooms sweep clean!" [SCOBELL *doesn't laugh.*] Just like that! Quite on the spur of the moment! "New brooms sweep clean!" [SCOBELL *doesn't laugh, but stands quite still—an awkward pause. She explains rather sharply.*] He was quite a new curate, and so she said "New brooms sweep clean."

[*A long pause.*] You will like my mother. [SCOBELL *has been showing signs of restlessness, and glancing out of window at the ship's funnels. After a pause.*] Is anything the matter?

SCOBELL. No. I really must see about my ticket. [*Making a slight effort to push the table from the window.*]

PATTY. Yes, but—you—haven't—er—a——

SCOBELL. [*Taking out his watch.*] I'd better get across at once.

PATTY. But Minnie said you particularly wished to see me.

SCOBELL. [*A little lamely.*] I thought I should like to have the pleasure of—of saying good-bye.

PATTY. Good-bye? But you sent for me to come from Southsea. I don't understand. Please explain.

SCOBELL. I was agreeably impressed the other night at the ball, and I said so to Fred last night—and—in his smoking-room——

PATTY. Yes. Well?

SCOBELL. And on the strength of that Mrs. Bracy telegraphed——

PATTY. Yes, there's her telegram. [*Producing telegram, giving it to him.*] "Your whole future at stake—most important you have an understanding with him before he sails?" Read it!

SCOBELL. I'm afraid Mrs. Bracy has been indiscreet——

PATTY. Indiscreet! But you said yourself that you were agreeably impressed by me. [*Pause. She speaks very sharply.*] Did you or did you not say you were agreeably impressed by me?

SCOBELL. At the ball—yes.

PATTY. Yes. Well? And that you would like to see me? [SCOBELL *does not reply. She speaks again very sharply.*] Did you or did you not say you wished to see me?

SCOBELL. Yes.

PATTY. Yes. Well? Why did you wish to see me?

SCOBELL. [*Lamely.*] I thought we might begin a disinterested friendship—

PATTY. [*With a little shriek, getting more and more angry, nearly crying with vexation and losing control over herself.*] Disinterested friendship! You couldn't suppose I should hurry over from Southsea for a disinterested friendship!

SCOBELL. I'm very sorry if I have caused you any inconvenience.

PATTY. Inconvenience! I haven't had any breakfast! And I had a most pressing invitation to the Barringers'. They're quite the nicest people in Southsea—one meets everybody there. Instead of that you bring me over here [*taking up the telegram which he has put on the table*] on the distinct understanding that you intended—I don't understand your conduct, Mr. Scobell. Will you please give me some explanation of it?

SCOBELL. [*Making a gentle movement to push the table back so that he can get out.*] I must be getting to my boat.

PATTY. Surely, Mr. Scobell, you will not dare to leave me in this terrible uncertainty. Before you go on board we must please have a thorough understanding. [*Sets herself resolutely at table. Pause.*] Will you or will you not please give me some explanation of your conduct?

SCOBELL. [*Getting angry and desperate.*] But my boat sails—will you kindly let me pass?

PATTY. Not that I wish to force myself upon you! Please don't think that. I could never stoop to make myself cheap to any man! I'm not driven to that necessity! No! No! A thousand times no! It's simply that my womanly pride and delicacy have been cruelly outraged. It's simply that I owe it to my sense of what is due to an English lady not to be dragged over from Southsea without any breakfast, and then made the sport of your caprice, while you sail off to Argentina, utterly oblivious of your honour, and of the woman you have entangled and deserted!

SCOBELL. Take it easy, my dear lady—take it easy!

PATTY. [*Shriek.*] My dear lady! My dear lady! You first inveigle me here and then you insult me. Oh, if I had known! Mr. Scobell, surely you will not be so ungentlemanly—so unmanly—but there will come a time when you will vainly remember how recklessly you threw away the happiness that is still within your grasp, if you only choose to pick it up! [*Suddenly bursting out.*] Oh! What have I said? What have I said? Oh! [*With a long wail she bursts into tears, flings herself over the table and sobs.*]

[SCOBELL, *very uncomfortable, on the other side of the table, watches her with growing embarrassment.*]

SCOBELL. My dear Miss Hanslope, I'm terribly sorry—

PATTY. [*Wailing from the table.*] If you're truly sorry, you can do no less, as a gentleman, than make amends.

SCOBELL. Will you please let me pass out?

PATTY. Then you're prepared to take the consequences?

SCOBELL. Certainly.

PATTY. Very well! Mr. Bracy will be here in a moment to demand a full explanation of your conduct.

SCOBELL. I'll write him about it. Meantime, my lawyers are Beame and Son, Gray's Inn Square. If you have any claim against me, please put your solicitors in communication with them. [*Very decidedly.*] Now, may I pass?

PATTY. [*Magnificently.*] No! How could you suppose that I could degrade myself by making a market of my most sacred feelings and bringing them into a Court of Law! No, the injuries you have done me cannot be paid by money—you have wounded my finest feelings! You have trampled upon——

[*Enter MINNIE and FRED at back.*]

FRED. Heigho! What's the matter?

PATTY. [*Continuing her harangue to SCOBELL.*] Yes, I refuse you! In the first place our slight acquaintance gave you no right whatever to make me an offer of marriage! And I'm sure the more I knew of you the less I should be inclined to accept you!

FRED. What's the matter?

PATTY. [*Losing her self-control, bursting into a fit of rage.*] I've never been so insulted in my life! [*To MINNIE and FRED.*] How could you bring me over from Southsea only to be annoyed and insulted by this man?

FRED. Lorry! What has he done, Pat?

PATTY. He has called me the most insulting names!

FRED. What names? [*Looking at SCOBELL.*]

PATTY. He said—he said—he said—"Take it easy,

my dear lady!" My dear lady! I've never been addressed in such a manner before! Minnie, here is your telegram! Now I want you both to read that over carefully, and say whether it doesn't amount to an offer of marriage. And then before you allow him to sail for Argentina, I want you to ask him plainly whether he intends to carry out his promise, or—where is he? [*She has turned her back to SCOBELL to talk to MINNIE and FRED.*]

[*Meanwhile SCOBELL has crept under the table and emerges from under it on all fours.*]

FRED. [*To SCOBELL.*] Lorry, we'd better clear this up, eh?

SCOBELL. [*Getting up.*] I'll write you fully. Good-bye, old fellow.

FRED. [*Embarrassed.*] You'll stay and have some lunch.

SCOBELL. Haven't a moment. I must catch this boat. Good-bye, Mrs. Bracy!

MINNIE. Good-bye? But can't you explain?

PATTY. [*Shrieks out to FRED.*] You surely won't let him leave this room without an explanation?

SCOBELL. [*Hurrying off.*] Take it easy, my dear lady! Take it easy!

[*Hurries off.*]

FRED. You seem to have muddled it again, Pat!

PATTY. It was all your fault, and Minnie's for bringing me over! [*Waiter enters with luncheon ready laid; puts it on table, pulls the table out from window.*] How could you suppose that I should go over to a wretched country like Argentina, where there aren't any shops—after all the really good offers I've refused!

You might have had more consideration for me! And without a mouthful of breakfast!

FRED. Well, here's some lunch!

PATTY. And the Barringers sent me such a pressing invitation to their croquet party! [*Looks at her watch.*] I shall just have time to get back to Southsea. [*Puts on her hat.*]

MINNIE. You'd much better stay and have some lunch.

PATTY. No, I can get some sandwiches somewhere. I must go. They'll expect me. I mustn't disappoint them! [*To WAITER.*] When does the next train start for Southsea? Come and get me a cab and a Bradshaw. At once! Please! Good-by, Minnie! Good-by, Fred! Your friend, Mr. Scobell, must be mad! [*To WAITER.*] Please—a cab and some sandwiches and my waterproof and umbrella! And a Bradshaw! Where are my gloves? [*Exit at back.*] Is there anybody then who can get me a cab and some biscuits?—I never was so insulted—and a Bradshaw—do you hear?—a cab and some biscuits or sandwiches!—or anything to eat! and my gloves!

[*Exit down passage.*]

[FRED shrugs his shoulders, points to the lunch. MINNIE and FRED sit down to the table which WAITER has pulled out into the room. PATTY'S voice is heard dying away along the passage.]

CURTAIN.

GRACE MARY,
A TRAGEDY IN THE CORNISH DIALECT
IN ONE ACT

The dramatic form, the local setting and dialect, and the realistic prose treatment employed in this little play, will remove it from any chance or pretence of comparison with the great imaginative ballad, "Michael Scott's Wooing," which Dante Gabriel Rossetti left unwritten.

PERSONS REPRESENTED

NICK PENTARGAN
ISAAC ROSEVEARE
LUKE JAGO
BARZILLAI TEAGUE
PETER HOBLYN
JOSHUA WEBBER
GRACE MARY ROSEVEARE
ELIZABETH TEAGUE
MINERS, PEASANTS, FISHER-PEOPLE

SCENE: *The Cliff Edge of the North Cornish Coast
Between "All Travellers' Inn" and ISAAC ROSE-
VEARE'S Cottage.*

TIME: *A summer night early in the Nineteenth Cen-
tury.*

GRACE MARY

SCENE: *The exterior of "All Travellers' Inn" on the North Cornish coast. Summer night. Misty moonlight. The inn is on the right with a covered shelter outside, in which are placed rough tables, with forms on each side. On the tables are tankards and mugs. The inn window looks out on the shelter and is open. A bright light from the inn illumines the tables and the persons seated there. The door of the inn is down stage left, and also opens into the shelter. Over the shelter is a weather-beaten signboard with "All Travellers' Inn, by Barzillai Teague" painted on it. On the left of the stage is ISAAC ROSEVEARE'S cottage, set diagonally; its windows look upon stage; the window of GRACE MARY'S room, on the top floor, is shut, and the curtains drawn apart. The window is lighted. The door of the cottage is approached by a short flight of stone steps at the corner of the house; the door being round the corner is not seen. At back of stage is the cliff line, and at a great distance below is the sea, the horizon line being scarcely discernible. Growing up from the cliff is a solitary tree with its branches blown landwards, its trunk rooted in the cliff beneath the edge. Discover ELIZABETH TEAGUE clearing up tankards, mugs, etc., from tables. BARZILLAI*

TEAGUE, *a little lame, bloated, jovial innkeeper, hobbles on right.*

ELIZ. Barzillai, you've been drenking again.

BARZ. Elizabeth, answer me this, ain't ut better to be drunk nor thirsty?

ELIZ. Ef yu must git drunk, why caan't 'ee git drunk upon your awn liquor an' your awn premises?

BARZ. Elizabeth, my liquor is gashly, an yu'me on my premises. An the man that gits drunk in the company of hez wife, ez no better than a baistly fule. Naw, my dear sawl, when I do git drunk I've got better taste nor to get drunk with you, Elizabeth. I du chuse my company.

ELIZ. [*Regarding him.*] An whose company ev 'ee bin drenkin' in to-day?

BARZ. Braave company, sure enough, Elizabeth.

ELIZ. Who's then?

BARZ. I've been drenkin' with—Shaan't tell 'ee, Elizabeth.

[GRACE MARY *opens her window in the cottage, candle in hand, looks out. She is a very pale, delicate girl, about twenty, with a wasted, unearthly look in her face. BARZILLAI points her out to ELIZABETH.*

GRACE MARY. [*Peering out into the darkness for a few moments, calls gently.*] Nick! Are 'ee there, my awn dear swateheart?

[*Waits a moment, listens, and then withdraws from window, draws the curtains together, leaves the window open. A few seconds after, the light disappears from the curtains.*

ELIZ. Aw, poor sawl, her du graw moar an' moar like a sperrit every day.

BARZ. Hur did look for oal the world as ef hur had just comed up from the dead, didn't hur?

ELIZ. Hur ev niver held up hur head since Nick Pentargan went away.

BARZ. Well, hur can hauld it up now, for Nick Pentargan ev eum hum agen.

ELIZ. What?

BARZ. I've been with un oal the afternune.

ELIZ. And that's the reason as yu'me in this baistly staate.

BARZ. Hauld thy tongue, Elizabeth. Tez only fules that don't know the valee an' happiness of gitting drunk that fly out against us—philosophers.

[GRACE MARY *enters from cottage, as if restlessly, goes up right, looks off, crosses to left, looks off, comes up to them disquieted.*

BARZ. I hope you'me better to-night, Grace Mary.

GRACE MARY. Is there any tidings down along?

BARZ. Naw. Naw tidings down along.

GRACE MARY. Are 'ee sure?

BARZ. Tidings consarning of who, Grace Mary?

GRACE MARY. Consarning of somewan that left here—abouts six months agone.

BARZ. [*Pause.*] Naw. [*Pause.*] What makes 'ee ax?

GRACE MARY. Because oal day long, I've had a sooart of a drawing pain here—[*with her hand upon her heart*—as if he wur a drawing me toward un.

BARZ. How so?

GRACE MARY. Like as if I wur aslape, and heerd un

a calling out to me for to come and help un—and I couldn't neither answer un, nor go to un, 'cause theree was like mountains atop of me.

BARZ. Aw! 'Tis straange, sure enough! But don't 'ee think anything more about un, theer's a dear maiden, or you'll never be braave and strong agen.

GRACE MARY. I shall never git strong again till I du know for sure that oal's well weth him. [*Goes to cottage, comes back very entreatingly.*] Would 'ee be so gude as to go down along to the village, and ax if theree's any tidings of un. I knaw 'tis fulish of me, but ye doan't knaw the ache as I've got about heere.

[*Putting her hand on her heart.*]

ELIZ. Tell her, Barzillai.

[*Exit ELIZABETH into inn. GRACE MARY looks at BARZILLAI; he looks down.*]

GRACE MARY. [*Suddenly.*] He's heere! I knawed it! You've seed un? Wheree?

BARZ. Down to Camelford.

GRACE MARY. [*Frantic with joy.*] How does he look? Did he ax after me? What did ye tell un about me? Is he coming here? He'd niver laive thaise paarts without coming to see me?

BARZ. Bide a bit quiet now, there's a dear maiden, or I waun't tell 'ee nort.

GRACE MARY. Tell me oal. Is he well? [*Very softly and searchingly.*] Ev he departed from hez evil coorses?

BARZ. Well——

[*Looks uncomfortable.*]

GRACE MARY. Daun't 'ee desave me now!

BARZ. He wor oalless a bit wild, and he oalless will be. Tez the natur of un.

GRACE MARY. He wur drenking?

BARZ. I hope theer's no gurt harm in a drap, wheere the liquor's gude.

GRACE MARY. Wheere did you laive un?

BARZ. He wur coming tooards the village.

GRACE MARY. To see me?

BARZ. Not azackly.

GRACE MARY. What vor then?

BARZ. He wur gwine to seek Luke Jago.

GRACE MARY. What vor? I've nivver gived un cause for anger agen Luke.

BARZ. Well, 'tis knawn down along that Luke did persuade your vaather to part Nick and you, cos Luke did want 'ee for hezzelf.

GRACE MARY. Iss—an ivver since Nick went away Luke ev been spaiking evil about un to vaather. I udn't wed Luke Jago, no, not if theere weren't another chap in the world. An' Nick du knaw ut; he du knaw that my haart ud break avore it ud ev a thought as worn't for him.

BARZ. Well, there's bad blood tween un and Luke; iss sure, vor Nick du knaw 'tis Luke as parted 'ee—that's oal I can tell 'ee. *[Going into inn.]*

GRACE MARY. I caan't abide heere and knaw he's so nigh me without spaking to un. I mus' come to 'ee, Nick.

[Going off, above cottage, left, meets ISAAC ROSEVEARE, who enters.]

ISAAC. *[A stern old Cornish Methodist.]* Wheere be gwine, Grace Mary? *[Turns to BARZILLAI.]* You've tould her that devil's cheeld is cummed home agen?

BARZ. Naw, Isaac—'twur her awn haart as tould her. Thee's best laive hur to go to un.

[Exit into inn.]

ISAAC. You wor gwine to seek Nick Pentargan?

GRACE MARY. Iss, vaather.

ISAAC. You did promise to give un up for ivver.

GRACE MARY. I didn't promise I udn't see un an' spake to un.

ISAAC. Grace, thy haart is longing vor un still.

GRACE MARY. I caan't help ut, vaather.

ISAAC. Would 'ee wed a drunkard, a swearer, a loose-liver, a castaway?

GRACE MARY. Daun't 'ee caal un hard naames. Tent ez fault. Sims us ef a wor born to bad-luck. Do 'ee caal to mind what his hum were when he wur a cheeld; hez awn mawther ded ev no pity on un, an' wished evil on un. An' ez vaather wur an evil man——

ISAAC. Iss, an' hez grandvaather. The Pentargans wer oaless evil-doers. An' why does thy haart cling to un continually?

GRACE MARY. I caen't tell 'ee why. The moar wicked an' miserable Nick ez, the moar he du seem to caal vor my pity an' luv. I du veel vor un like es ef I wer ez mawther, an' he wer helpless an' stretchin out ez arms to me—I du veel I must go to un.

ISAAC. What?!

GRACE MARY. You du know tez not contrariness with me. I ev allays obeyed 'ee, and I allays will till the end of ut.

ISAAC. God bless 'ee, my dearie. I know tez thy haart, an' not thy will that loves that devil's cheeld.

GRACE MARY. Iss, tez my haart, and maybe my will too.

ISAAC. Let un aloan. Let un answer vor hez sins where he's accountable, and kape out of our path.

GRACE MARY. Aw, vaather, the power of love is

wonderful. 'There's luv' enow in my haart to burn up oal the wickedness in Nick Pentargan, ef a wur twenty times the devil's cheeld!

ISAAC. What?!

GRACE MARY. Aw, doan't 'ee be angry with me.

ISAAC. Naw, my dear, I won't be angry with 'ee.

GRACE MARY. I du feel sartin sure, vaather, that if you would lev us wed, I could saave un, vaather—tez hez oanly chaance. Daun't 'ee deny me. Tez my sawl as shall answer for ez.

ISAAC. Then thy sawl will be lost. Tez lies that a woman can saave a man. A man must save hezzelf, if a's saved at oal. An' let Nick Pentargan save hezzelf.

GRACE MARY. But he caen't; he'll be losted.

ISAAC. So be it then, if so be as my Grace Mary en't losted with un.

GRACE MARY. Aw, daun't 'ee part us, vaather!

ISAAC. Harkee, my dear, you'm oal I've got in the woorld. I luv' ee more than oal the woorld. I would raather see thee a laying dead in thee bed upsteers theere [*pointing to her window*] than wed to Nick Pentargan. Now plaise yourself, my dearie, an' wed un if you will!

GRACE MARY. You du knaw, vaather, as I've oallus obeyed 'ee, and I shall obey 'ee now.

ISAAC. [*Kisses her.*] I thank God for giving me an obedient cheeld. Tez gitting late. Come indoors and play thy music to me, an' we'll forget un.

[*Leading her to the door.*]

GRACE MARY. But, vaather, ef Nick should come to-night, you wan't forbid me to spake to un?

ISAAC. 'Twould do nort but pain thee, my dear. Be

my braave maiden, and promise me ef Nick comes thee waun't spake to un, or make a sign to un.

GRACE MARY. Vaather, I caen't. If Nick do come, the very haart will laip out of my body to meet un.

ISAAC. Ef thy eye offend thee, pluck it out. Ef thy right hand offend thee, cut it off. Tez but wan stroke. Tez thy sawl, thy aun dear sawl as I plaid for.

GRACE MARY. But Nick's sawl—I do care mooare for hez dear sawl nor vor my awn.

ISAAC. Theest made an idol of un. He stands 'tween thy God and thee.

GRACE MARY. Naw, naw, vaather.

ISAAC. Iss, iss. Do as I tell 'ee. Do as I command thee. Naw, naw, I daun't command thee, I intreat thee. For love of thy dear mawther as ev gone avore, for haupe of seeing her agen wheree theree's no partin's, bring thy stubborn haart to its knees—make it obey thee. Say the words after me: "I du promise thee, vaather, ef Nick Pentargan du come to-night"—

GRACE MARY. "I du promise 'ee, vaather, if Nick Pentargan du come to-night"—

ISAAC. "I will not spaik to un wan word"—

GRACE MARY. "I will not spaik to un wan word"—

ISAAC. "Or make any sign whatsoever"—

GRACE MARY. "Or make any sign whatsoever"—

ISAAC. "Or look at un, or think on un."

GRACE MARY. Not think on un? Aw, vaather, how can I help ut?

ISAAC. Tear un out from thee haart! Do ut, my dear, and be at peace. Promise after me. "I will not look at un, or think one thought of un, of my aun free will."

GRACE MARY. [*With great effort.*] "I will not look

at him, or think one thought of him—of my aun free will.” I’ve said it, vaather.

ISAAC. An’ thou’ll do ut?

GRACE MARY. So vur as God gives me graace.

ISAAC. An’ He will. Thee’ll be in great peace soon, my dear.

GRACE MARY. Iss, but ’twill be like the peace of them as are dead. The peace of well-doing en’t so calm and quieting as the peace of the churchyard, ez ut, vaather?

[Noise of riotous laughing and shouting heard off left.]

ISAAC. *[Looks off.]* Go indoors, my dear——

GRACE MARY. Sims I heerd hes voice——

[Trying to look off right.]

ISAAC. *[Stopping her, sternly.]* Thy promise! Go indoors, an’ set thyself to thy music. ’Twill drown ez voice, an’ ’twill drown the thought of un out of thy mind. *[Burst of uproarious laughter.]* Iss, play thy music—and—*[very solemnly.]* Remember thy promise. Thee waun’t break ut? *[With great earnestness.]*

GRACE MARY. *[Same tone of great earnestness.]* No. I shall kape ut, vaather.

[Another riotous burst of laughter off left. She shows pain. She goes into cottage.]

[Enter LUKE JAGO, left.]

LUKE. He’s coming with seven worser sperrits nor hezzelf, an’ a du swear by oal that’s holy as he’ll make thee aupen thy doors to un, an’ laive un to spaik to ez awn dear maid.

ISAAC. Ez maid? A du call her ez maid?

LUKE. Iss, and a du swear as nort shall part them. Isaac, you waun’t go back on your word to me? I du

love her sore. Isaac, you waun't laive her wed Nick Pentargan?

ISAAC. Naw, she shall nivver wed Nick Pentargan—that I du vow.

LUKE. An' maybe, when time has gone by—her haart ull turn from un, and she'll wed me.

ISAAC. That shall be as God plaíses.

[*Enter left NICK PENTARGAN, a young fellow about thirty, half-drunk, wildly excited, at the head of a rabble, among whom are PETER HOBLYN, a sailor, and JOSHUA WEBBER. ISAAC and NICK stand confronting each other. Pause.*]

NICK. [*Civilly.*] Gude evenin', Isaac.

[*ISAAC looks at him sternly and then goes towards steps. NICK intercepts him, stands at the bottom of steps.*]

NICK. [*Doffing his cap, half-respectfully, half-mockingly, with great politeness.*] Gude evenin', Isaac Roseyeare.

[*ISAAC makes a movement to pass him.*]

NICK. [*Mounts one or two steps, in a fierce tone.*] Naw, Isaac. You daun't go in to your house till you've passed the time o' day weth me. [*Pause.*] Come now, Isaac, find your gude manners, and wish me "Gude evenin'."

[*Pause.*]

ISAAC. [*Calls to the door.*] Grace Mary. Theere stans a man at my door—you du knaw who tez. Kape thy promise, my dear. Lock my door in ez face.

[*Pause. The lock turns. NICK shows pain and despair for some moments, then pulls himself together with a defiant air.*]

NICK. [*Arms akimbo, planted firmly on steps.*] Oal the saame, Isaac, thou shalt pass the time o' day with me avore I let thee in, aye, that thou shalt, ef I kape

thee waiting heere tell 'tis time for us boath to be judged, an' thou du go up along, while I—aw, my sonnies—I du wonder wheere the devil I shall go.

[GRACE MARY'S voice heard singing the evening hymn, accompanied by an accordion.

NICK shows that he is touched. After a line of the hymn the voice falters, and breaks down, music stops.

ISAAC. [*Speaking at the door.*] Ev 'ee brokken down, my dear? Try again, an' God give thee courage.

NICK. Isaac, vor hur saake—spaik a paisible word to me.

ISAAC. I daun't knaw 'ee, Nick Pentargan.

NICK. Sonnies, do 'ee go inside, an' laive me to ev a word or two weth Isaac aloane. Oal of 'ee.

[*The men go into the inn, except LUKE, who stands there.*

NICK. [*To LUKE.*] Dost 'ee hear, Luke or Judas, or whatsomever thy naame ez. Thee'st done me harm enow. Tak thyself away—about thy business.

[*LUKE sneaks into the inn after the others.*

NICK and ISAAC are left alone.

NICK. Isaac, thee wouldn't see me ruined body an' sawl.

ISAAC. [*Sternly.*] Daun't I tell 'ee, I daun't knaw 'ee.

NICK. Nay, but thou shalt knaw me.

ISAAC. Who art thee, then?

NICK. I'm the devil's cheeld that luv's thy daughter, an' if thee daun't laive me see her, and——

[*Raises his arm as if to strike ISAAC.*

ISAAC. Would 'ee strike me?

NICK. Naw. But I du main to come to her.

ISAAC. Hur ev vowed to her God hur'll ev nort to do weth 'ee.

NICK. Tez 'er lips ev vowed. Hur haart would nivver du ut.

ISAAC. She'll kape her word.

NICK. Naw, thee'll set her free from ut. Hearkee, Isaac. My life, my immortal sawl, are bound up weth hurs. Ax hur if ten't so; ax if there en't a bond between hur an' me that God ezzelf ev set ez sale on, an' can nivver be broke asunder.

ISAAC. Tez broke. An' thou thyself ev broke ut.

NICK. How?

ISAAC. By thy awn evil life. I ded promise the maid to 'ee ef thee would laive thy evil ways, and thee didst promise to du ut. How did thee kape thy word?

NICK. Ten't no fault of mine, Isaac. Thee dost know the history of me, an' oal of us.

ISAAC. Iss, as all thy vore-vaathers ev been, so wilt thou be to the end.

NICK. Naw, Isaac. Theere's my salvation inside thy doors. Theere's evil in me—I know ut well. When I'm away from hur, sims to me, I'm moast oal evil. But when I du come anigh to hur, hur du quicken the gudeness in me into a flame, an' I'm moast oal gude. Isaac, I've a come back to hev a new life weth hur vor my awn dear wife. Daun't 'ee part us. I'll change from thez hour.

ISAAC. I've a read somewheere about the leopard changing ez spots, an' the Ethiopian changing ez skin, but I daun't believe as 'twere ivver proved. Hearken, Nick, if thee du waunt to wed Grace Mary, thee tek thyself awaay to Africa, an' go an' bring me back a

leopard with hez skin changed to a lamb's, or an Ethiopian weth ez flesh changed to be white like wan ov our English babes,—bring either wan or other ov thaise two animals, and I'll believe then that ye can do good ez are accustomed to do evil; I'll believe that a devil's cheeld like you can be changed into an angel of light, ef you wor to wed my Grace Mary. An' I'll giv' her to 'ee. But I'll nivver give her to 'ee till then, so help me God.

[Turns to go. NICK shows great despair.

Accordion plays again. NICK and ISAAC listen, much affected.

NICK. *[In low tone, great despair.]* Then tez oal over tween hur an' me, Isaac?

ISAAC. Iss sure. Make theeself sure of that.

[Going up steps.

NICK. Isaac——

[Approaching him.

ISAAC. Say on.

NICK. *[Very quiet and appealingly.]* When I du laive this plaace to-night, I du laive like Cain, a wanderer an' a vagabond on the vaace of the earth. I shall nivver see hur again, or spaik to hur, or hear hur voice—but I shall live an' wander on, an' on, an' on for years an' years, with nort to live an' wander for. An' my haart is feerly dead within me. I du wish 'twould plaise Heaven to mak' an end of me heer an' now——

ISAAC. Aw, how can thee speak sa wickedly?

NICK. Cause tez how I du feel. There's no taste ef life left in me withut hur. Sims to me as I caan't vaace it now. But if hur tells me hurself that hur ev east me off, then I du promise 'ee, Isaac, I'll give thee no vurther trouble, an' I'll nivver see thee nor hur

agen, but I'll drag on till I drop into my grave. But let me hear from hur awn dear lips as hur ev giv' me up.

ISAAC. Naw. 'Twould only pain hur. Vor hur saake tek thyself off when I du bid thee.

NICK. Naw. Let her send me away, an' I'll go.

ISAAC. Naw, thee shaan't see hur.

NICK. Nay, but I will.

ISAAC. [*Goes up, stands at top of steps, knocks at door.*] Grace Mary. Thee du knaw who is outside. Ef thee will kape thy vow an' save thy sawl, unlock thez door, an' the very next moment go upstairs to thy awn room, an' lock thyself in so that no wan can come anigh thee. But ef thou wult brake thy word, an' be losted for ivver, bide downstairs an' spaik to him agens't thy vow. Chuse between thez man an' thy God.

[*Pause. The lock is heard to turn. ISAAC holds the door-handle a few seconds.*

NICK runs eagerly up the steps. A light appears in GRACE MARY'S room above.

ISAAC opens the door, looks eagerly in, and then points triumphantly inside to

NICK. NICK shows great despair. Exit ISAAC into cottage, shuts door; lock is heard to turn again. NICK comes down the steps in great despair, walks up and down for a moment or two.

NICK. [*Shouts into inn.*] Hi, my sonnies! Hi, Barzillai—where be 'ee oal of ye? Hi! Hi! Hi!

[*Enter from inn the drinkers, JOSHUA, PETER, and BARZILLAI.*]

BARZ. What ez ut, Nick?

NICK. I du want to ev just wan pleasant evenin'

with oal of ye avore I du laive ye. What'll 'ee take, Peter?

PETER. Saame as avore, Barzillai.

NICK. Josh?

JOSHUA. I sez ditto.

NICK. An' you, David?

DAVID. I caan't du better I spoase nor kape to Plymouth gin.

NICK. Not ef 'ee waant to send thee head burning maazed and mad like mine. Barzillai, tek the orders vrom oal.

[BARZILLAI takes orders and then goes into inn.

[LUKE JAGO enters from inn.]

NICK. Aw, yu'me theere, Luke Jago?

LUKE. Iss.

NICK. Twer yu as set hur vaather again me.

LUKE. I did think I wer' doing Graace Maary a brave gude turn to kape her from wedding thee, Nick.

NICK. Well, ye've done ut. Sit ye down. [*Points to chair.*] What'll ye take to drink?

LUKE. I waun't drink weth ye.

NICK. Yu shall drink two belths weth me to-night avore we du part. Set down, or I'll force thee, an' pour the liquor down thy droaat an' stop the lies from coming up ut. [*Very sternly and threateningly.*] Set down when I tell 'ee! [LUKE sits.

[BARZILLAI and ELIZABETH enter from inn with liquor, which guests take. ELIZABETH fills glasses up with water.]

NICK. [*To LUKE.*] What will 'ee take?

LUKE. I daun't caare—what thee plaizes.

NICK. Barzillai, do 'ee bring Luke Jago and me a

double portion o' Plymouth gin—a double portion vor Luke, 'cause tez ez health we'me gwine to drenk. An' a double portion vor me, 'cause the more liquor I du drenk, the sooner I shall forget the sweet angel that is losted to me vor ivver.

[*Glancing up at GRACE MARY'S window, shows remorse; a gesture of throwing it off.*

Exit BARZILLAI.

NICK. Wait a bit, sonnies, daun't 'ee drenk till I get my liquor an' gie 'ee the toast. Tez the helth of oal snakes, an' sly, underhand, mischief-making varmin as I du want 'ee oal to drenk. [LUKE rises angrily.]

NICK. Aw, thee dost know as I main thee. Sit down. Sit down, I tell 'ee. [LUKE sits, slowly.]

[*Enter BARZILLAI with two glasses nearly filled with spirits, and a decanter of water.*]

NICK. [*Takes his up.*] A double portion! Tez gude.

BARZ. Thee'st better put some water long weth ut, Nick. Tez a powerful sperrut.

NICK. Daun't I tell 'ee I want to drown my thoughts so deep—[*glancing in agony at window*—so deep that they'll nivver rise up agen. Now, my sonnies, heere's to oal sichy sly snakes as Luke Jago. [*To LUKE, threateningly.*] Drenk when I tell 'ee.

[LUKE drinks. NICK tosses his off at one gulp.]

NICK. That's braave. Drenk it oal up. Oal of ye. I du start awaay frum heereabouts to-morrow morn—[*speaking the words at the open window*—an' none of ye wan't nivver see me again [*calling up at window.*] An' I du want ye oal to wish me luck on my journey.

BARZ. Whichey way be gwine, Nick?

NICK. I'm gwine strait hum to my vaather Nick. So cumraades oal, put a braave vaace on ut, an' giv' me a comfortable start on my travels. [*Pointing down.*]—Luke Jago, I towld 'ee ye should drenk twice weth me avore we parted. I rackon yu'll be pleased to drenk to my sawl's destruction and ruin, waun't 'ee?

LUKE. [*Venomously.*] Iss, with oal my haart.

[*A long moan from GRACE MARY'S window.*]

NICK. [*Suddenly runs to window with a cry of compunction.*] Naw, naw, my dear angel, I daun't main ut! Spaik wan word to me, my awn swaithaart!

[*Pause.*]

LUKE. Caal a little louder! [*Pause.*] Mayhap hur's deaf or aslaip.

NICK. Grace Mary, my haart's brokken! I'm feer dying for a sight ov 'ee. Ef you've promised you waun't spaik, do 'ee put yer hand in token yu forgev me. Dost 'ee heer?

LUKE. Laive off thy clacketing, an' tek theeself away, thee dog in the manger.

NICK. Grace Mary, spaik to me! Awnly wan word I du beg of 'ee, my swait, to shut thez eer chap's mouth.

LUKE. Tek a drop o' liquor to clear thy droat, an' then caal out agen!

NICK. Spaik, my dear—I du know yez awnly on the other side of the curtains—an' ye can heer ivvery word I'm spaiking. Won't 'ee jest show yezzel vor but one momint.

LUKE. [*Laughs.*] Hur ev thrawn 'ee over, like the gude-fur-nort that thee art. Hur's done with 'ee, an' hur'll nivver cum to thee, no, not ef thee dost stan' theree for siven yeer!

NICK. Hur'll nivver cum to me?

LUKE. Naw! not ef thee du split thy droat weth caaling an' beseeching hur—I say hur waun't come to thee.

NICK. By God, hur shall come to me! Barzillai, bring Luke Jago and me a treble portion o' the hottest fire and brimstone stuff as ye've got in thee house, for to drenk to my sawl's ruin an' damnation. Dost 'ee 'ear? [*Very commandingly.*]

[*Exit BARZILLAI into inn.*]

NICK. Grace Mary—harken—I've a sworn that thou shalt cum out to me, an' I'll kape my word ef I lose my sawl vor it. [*BARZILLAI reënters with liquor.*]

NICK. [*Calling up to window.*] I giv' thee wan more chance, Grace Mary. If thee waun't come, I'll drenk to my sawl's everlasting ruin.

NICK [*To BARZILLAI.*] Bring the liquor here.

[*The window curtains are seen to be clutched from within.*]

NICK. Aw! Thee dost hear me! Come an' saave me, my love! I command thee. Come, or I'll drenk! [*Takes one glass from BARZILLAI. To LUKE.*] Take thy glass. Drenk to my sawl's everlasting ruin. Will 'ee come?

[*Lifting glass to lips.*]

[*The grasp on the window curtains is relaxed.*]

A long, terrible shriek from within, and the sound of a body falling. NICK puts down glass, horror-stricken. The next moment the wraith of GRACE MARY appears outside the door on the top of the steps.

NICK. Look! Look!

[*Points at her.*]

LUKE. Look where? There's nort!

NICK. Look! Look! I tould 'ee hur'd come!

[Stands pointing.]

LUKE. Theere's nort theere, ez theere?

NICK. Iss! Iss! Daun't 'ee see hur? Josh! Peter!

JOSH. Naw, naw.

PETER. Naw, Nick, I can see nort.

BARZ. Nick, do 'ee come indoors, theere's a good lad, an' daun't 'ee play weth thy sawl's ruin. Come in oal of ye—it feer makes my blood run cold. Come in.

[Some of the men withdraw into inn, still looking at NICK, who stands pointing at GRACE MARY.]

LUKE. Thee'rt mazed weth drenk! I tell thee there's nort theere. Come inside, sonnies! Come in an' lave the fule to ez awn fuling!

NICK. *[Still points.]* Look! Look!

[Exeunt all into inn except NICK.]

NICK. *[Going a step toward her.]* Ez ut thee, Grace Mary? *[Rubbing his eyes, trying to collect himself.]* Spaik to me!

GRACE. I've a-come ut thy bidding, Nick! Thy words did draw the very haart out o' my body with luv to thee.

NICK. Say ut again! I did knaw 'tworn't thy awn dear self that shut the door on me.

GRACE. Thee knawcst I udn't. But thy wickedness an' evil ways ev a brokken my haart, Nick.

NICK. I'll change vrom thes hour. I'll laive all my wickedness an' maik myself fit vor thee, my awn dear angel.

GRACE. Tez vor that I've come to thee, to maik thee a good true man from thez time foath. Think, my awn

dear love, as I'm a watching ovver thee ivvery momint o' thy life from this time. Theere's nivver a deed, nor a wish, nor a thought o' thy haart but I shall knaw it. Will 'ee promise me to strive an' kape thyself vrom evil, Nick? Tez thy awnly chance of meeting me agen.

NICK. Iss! Iss! But I do see thee naw! Come nearer to me. Let me hauld thee in my arms——

GRACE. [*Fading away over the sea.*] Thee'lt nivver hauld me in thy arms, nivver see me or spaik to me agen on this earth.

NICK. Grace Mary! Grace Mary! Daun't 'ee laive me, dear. Daun't 'ee laive me!

GRACE. [*Fading.*] I won't laive 'ee! [*Fading.* NICK goes after her towards edge of cliff.] I'll watch auver 'ee to the end. I did shut the door upon thee to-night, Nick. But I'll pray vor the door to be kipt aupen where I be gwine.

NICK. [*With outstretched arms, following her to the cliff's edge.*] Cum back to me, my dear! My haart waun't give thee up! Thee'rt tied to me in life and death! Cum back to me! [GRACE MARY fades.

GRACE MARY'S voice. The door shall be kipt aupen vor 'ee. Good-bye.

[NICK turns round, bewildered, goes up the cottage steps, knocks loudly, comes down steps, and looks up at window.

[Enter ISAAC from cottage.

NICK. Graace Mary—dost 'ee knaw?

ISAAC. Iss, I heerd a scream, an' I went upstairs, and theere hur wor—laid on the floor. Hur haart ev brokken vor thee. Hur's dead! What can us do?

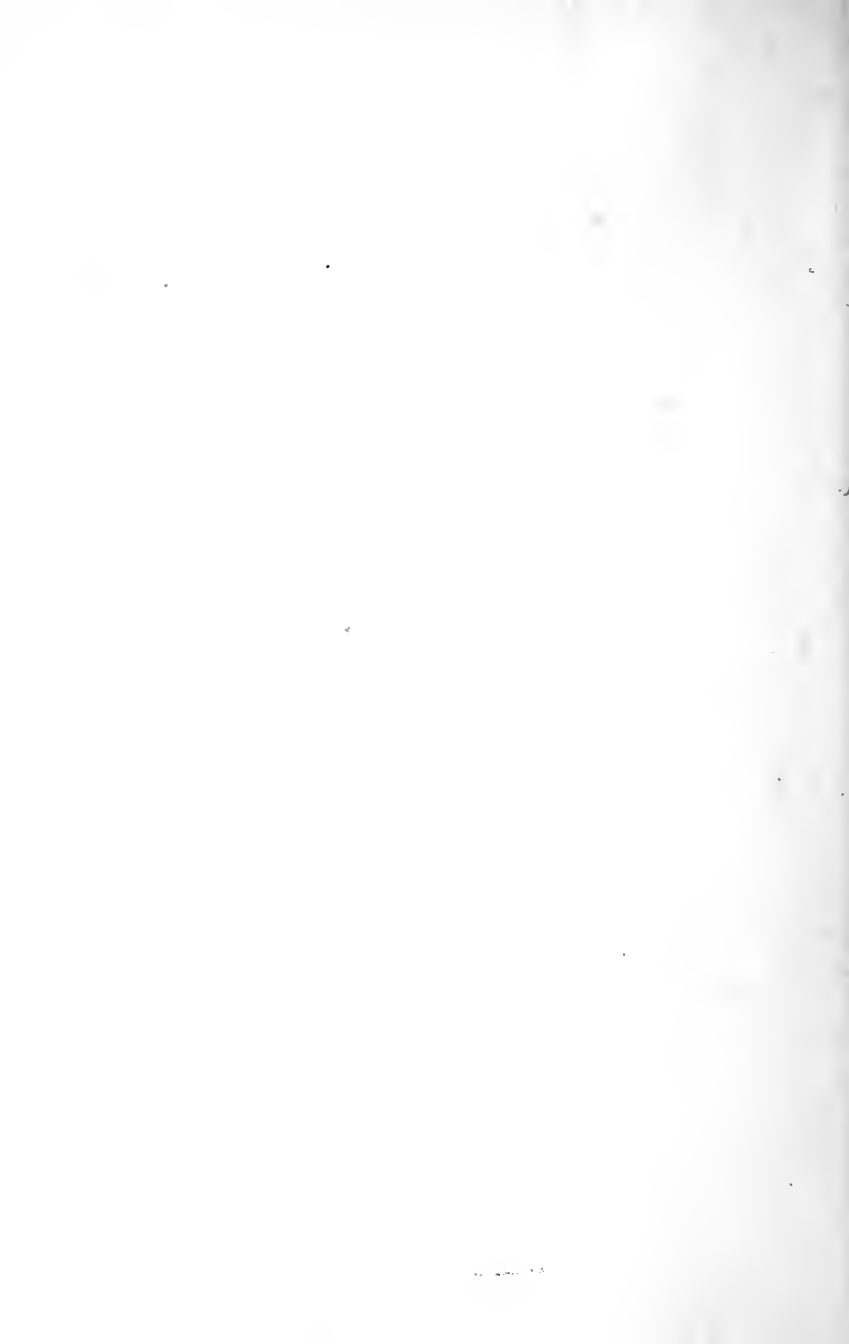
NICK. God giv' me graace, I du main to follow hur, Isaac.—[*Speaking toward the space where she has*

faded.—I'll follow 'ee, my dear. Kape the door aupen vor me.—Isaac, thee waun't shut the door on me now?

ISAAC. Come in. We'll go to hur together.

[Holds out his hand. NICK takes it. They go into the cottage together.]

CURTAIN







AA 000 599 630 1

